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HISTORY
OF
AURICULAR CONFESSION.

VOL. II.

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C. K. OGDEN

THE
HISTORY
OF
AURICULAR CONFESSION,

RELIGIOUSLY, MORALLY, AND POLITICALLY CONSIDERED
AMONG ANCIENT AND MODERN NATIONS.

BY
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BOOK II.

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CHAPTER IV.

DEBAUCHERY AND IRREGULARITIES INTRODUCED BY MEANS OF CONFESSION INTO THE NUN NERIES OF TUSCANY.

IT is easy for monks and depraved priests to seduce, by the means of confession, especially among the lower orders, females who live in the world: the thing becomes still more so relatively to the nuns or *pensionnaires* confined in convents. Depravity introduced into those houses spreads like an epidemic, with symptoms and consequences more or less fatal, according to the nature and inclinations of individuals.

This species of wickedness, as I have had opportunities of convincing myself from information derived from different journies in Italy and Spain,

is less uncommon than is supposed, especially in countries where the priests, and principally the monks, have much influence, and enjoy the consideration of the people. Most of the seductions that take place in what is called the tribunal of penitence, remain unknown to the public, even when denunciations, avowals, or still more positive results, exhibit proofs, either to families, or to the superior ecclesiastics, whether regular or secular. For, on the one hand, the honour of the persons compromised and that of their parents; and, on the other, the interests of the Church, and even an ill-understood reserve, which civil authority thinks proper to use on these occasions, as well as the impunity usually attached to so great a crime, are so many causes that prevent it from coming to the knowledge of the public; which, of course, renders it still more common.

We could cite, in support of what has just been said, and in confirmation of what will follow, several facts which occurred in the convents of Paris before the revolution of 1789, and particularly in the abbey of Pentemont, where, having been introduced by college companions, engaged in the ecclesiastical profession, we were able to judge, *ex auditu et visu*, of the irregularities which prevailed in that convent. We shall, therefore, remain satisfied, without entering into any other details, with making known the excessive deprava-

vity that had long prevailed in the convents of Tuscany, the existence of which has been officially stated by the investigation made on this subject by order of the Grand Duke Leopold, and by the care of the pious and learned Ricci, bishop of Pistoia. We derive what follows from the facts, acts, correspondence, and orders of Leopold, concerning this affair, and which, remaining in the possession of the family of Ricci, have been communicated by them to M. de Potter, who has reproduced them in a work entitled “*Vie de Scipion de Ricci, évêque de Pistoie et Prato.*” (Bruxelles, 1825, 3 vol. 8vo.) The monachal libertinism, introduced into convents of Tuscany by means of confession, dated from a period very anterior to the reign of Leopold. For more than a century and a half, the dissoluteness of the order of the Dominicans had excited reproach and public dissatisfaction. The spiritual direction practised by the monks towards the nuns, was a source of scandal which was maintained and fomented by interest, dissipation, and vicious habits.* We find, in 1642, a petition addressed to the grand duke of that period, and signed by the holy standard-bearer (*gonfalonier*), and other persons of Pistoia, to the number of one hundred and ninety-four.

* Sorgente di scandali, a cui aprirono largo campo l'interesse, la dissapazione ed il mal costume.

Therein, they begged that a speedy remedy might be provided for the indecent conduct of the monks in the convents of Saint Catharine and Saint Lucia.* Even this affair was hushed up, in order not to compromise the first families of the nobility, to which these nuns belonged.†

This kind of debauchery, which had become excessive during the reign of Leopold, was known by means of the inquiries instituted by that prince, in consequence of the denunciations of two nuns of the convent of Saint Catherine of Pistoia, who entreated him to save them from the execrable principles professed by those monks, their directors.‡

Thus they learnt that the monks used to eat and drink with the nuns whom they preferred, and that they passed the time with them in their private cells. The greater part of the girls used to deprive themselves of all their money and goods, and would even go without the necessaries of life to enrich their lovers.§ “I do not state anything,”

* L'indecente contegno che si teneva dai frati domenicani nei coventi di S. Caterina e di S. Lucia.

† Tanto delicato et geloso, che a pena se ne può dare minimo cenno, non che convenga metterne in carta alcuno particolare, essendo queste monache sangue principalissimo di questa città.

‡ De esecrande massime dei frati domenicani loro direttori.

§ Quesivi mangiando e bevendo colle lore più confidenti

says Ricci, "of which I have not proofs." He also remarks that the monks were in the habit of passing the night in the dormitory of the nuns, and that this custom had long been observed by the priors and confessors of the nuns.*

The inquiry instituted by Leopold must necessarily, as Ricci tells us, have made the scandal public, by forcing several persons to reveal the most infamous iniquities authorised by the confessors and superiors of the Dominicans.† Leopold caused all the nuns to be interrogated by the lieutenant of police, and forbade the monks, upon pain of imprisonment, to approach the monasteries, on account of the depraved conduct of all those who performed the duties of priors and confessors. It was discovered that this corruption had been propagated by the monks in the convents of Florence, Prato, Pisa, Siena, Perugia, Faenza, &c., &c.

We find, in Leopold's correspondence, a letter that had been addressed to him by a nun of Cas-

parziali, trattenendosi a solo a sola in qualche cella, e stando fino a dormire in camera apperta.

* Di queste irregolarità, vengono imputati, non solo i presenti padri priore e confessore, ma è costante il pessimo stile di tutti quelli che sono destinati di tempo in tempo a questi impieghi.

† A segno di render publico lo scandalo di condurre molti a palesar le piu infami iniquità, autorizzate dai confessori e dai direttori di quell'ordine.

tiglione Fiorentino, which proves that the Dominicans were not the only corrupters of women. "Our convent," says she, "is under the dependence and direction of the Franciscan friars (*récollets*), or minor observantins, and, consequently, in the greatest laxity and in extreme immorality..... I cannot complain to the provincial; for the monks will never listen to anything in complaints of this kind.....The nuns are obliged to allow such enormous sins to be committed, if they do not wish to be shut up for life, under any pretence.....The commissioner is invited to the convent, and goes with the young nuns into their chambers, with one of them at a time, or with two at most, if they are such as may be trusted, and then he locks himself in.....The monks who are intimate with the nuns make them bolder than lackeys.....A few years ago, one was found in the convent during the night, and the constables came to turn him out!" This nun terminates her letter by entreating him not to divulge her name, for, she observes, if what she had just written to the prince were known, it would be enough to cause her to be poisoned by her companions, so low were they sunk in vice.

It may be supposed that amid depravity so generally spread throughout Italy, the Jesuits were not the only monks whose virtue had remained intact, and who had not known how to

make use of confession for a vile purpose. Accordingly, an ecclesiastic of Rome wrote to the bishop of Pistoia: "I have been told that it had been known, through private letters, that the first seducer in the convent of Saint Catherine of Pistoia, had been a Jesuit. I know of a monastery where a Jesuit used to practise improper familiarities with the nuns; he used to say that by obeying him they did a very virtuous action, since they showed much repugnance." It appears, moreover, that this was a practice to which the monks had accustomed the nuns; for the Bishop of Pistoia, having presented himself before some nuns obstinate in vice, in order to restore them by gentle means to sentiments of virtue, and having told them that he had brought them the *little Jesus*, one of them replied in the most indecent manner.

Six nuns of the convent of Saint Catherine of Pistoia denounced the infamous practices of which their confessors and superiors were guilty. In this petition, which was presented to Leopold, we find the following facts: "The monks often come to meet us at the side of the sacristy, of which they have almost all the keys; and there is there an iron-grating sufficiently large, where they conduct themselves in the most shameless manner."

"If, besides, they find any opportunity of entering the convent, under any kind of pretence, they come and remain alone in the chambers of such as

are devoted to them. All of them, even the provincials, are, more or less, of the same stamp. They are not ashamed to take advantage of the circumstances in which they visit the convent, to do the things of which we have just spoken. They give utterance to brutal maxims, which suppose an absence of every moral feeling. They are incessantly repeating that we are too happy in being able to satisfy all our inclinations. They say that after having left the world everything is ended with us. They add, that even the writings of Saint Paul ought to serve to enlighten us.

“All sorts of indecencies are suffered to be committed in the parlour. Though we often warn them, yet they never prevent any of the dangerous connexions which are formed in the convent, and never make it their duty to interrupt them. Accordingly, it has very frequently happened, in consequence of this, that men who had managed, by address, to get the keys of the house, have entered at night.* Such as allow themselves to be led by their counsels are cherished and protected on every occasion, and are gratified even in their most extravagant caprices: the others must resolve to outrage their consciences by following the same course, or to undergo an endless persecution.

* E da questo ne è acaduto di esser entrato piu volte gente in tempo di notte a deliziarsi e riposare colle monache.

This is precisely what is now taking place among us."

The inveterate corruption that had long existed among the monks whose duty it was to confess nuns was again stated in a report made to Leopold, in obedience to his orders, by the wardens of the Convent of Saint Catherine of Siena, in the City of Pistoia. After having mentioned in this report several things which prove the immorality of the monks—as, for instance, that they repaired to the cells of the nuns, or remained alone with them—it is added: "If they administer the consolations of religion to any dying person, they eat and sleep in the monastery, and they dine with whomsoever they please, even with the vestry-nuns. Not only are the fathers, priors, and the present confessors, accused of this negligence and these irregularities, but it is avowed that the bad conduct of which the latter have been guilty had, for a long time, become a habit with all the friars who were successively destined to perform these duties."*

The depravity of morals, and the licentiousness introduced into the convents, are further esta-

* Di queste irregolarità, vengono imputati, non solo i presenti P. P. priore e confessore, ma è costante il pessimo stile di tutti quelli che sono destinati di tempo in tempo a questi impieghi.

blished by the letters which the prioress of the convent of Saint Catherine, at Pistoia, named Peroccini, wrote to Doctor Camporini, the rector of the episcopal seminary of that town. "To answer the questions you ask me I should require much time, and an excellent memory to remember the many things that have happened during the twenty-five years that I have spent among monks, and all those also which I have heard related about them. I shall not speak of friars who are no more. As to the others whose conduct is blameable, there are more than you imagine; among others (here she names nine of them). But why name any more? Excepting three or four friars among so many monks, whether living or dead, whom I have known, there is not one who was not of the same stamp. They all profess the same maxims, and their conduct is the same. Their intercourse with the nuns is of the utmost familiarity.* When the monks come to visit a sick person, it is their custom to sup with the nuns, to sing, dance, and play with them, and they sleep in the convent. Their maxim is that God has forbidden hatred and not love.† I affirm that

* *Tolttime tre o quattro di tanti vivi e morti che ho trattati, sono tutti dell' istesso calibro, hanno tutti l' istesse massime et l' istesso contegno. Si tratta con le monache con più confidenza che se fossero amogliati.*

† *Hanno per massima che iddio ha proibito l' odio e non*

they have the art of corrupting, not only the young and innocent, but even the most circumspect and knowing; and, without a miracle, no one can frequent their company without at length yielding to this species of diabolical temptation.

“The priests are the husbands of the nuns, and the lay-brothers of the lay-sisters.....How many bishops are there not in the Pontifical States who have also discovered immorality in the convents of their dioceses? However, they have never rooted out the evil with which, nevertheless, they are so well acquainted. They lacked the means of being able to inspire some confidence in the nuns, whom the monks make believe that they who reveal what passes in the interior of the order are excommunicated. God is my witness that I do not speak from ill-will. The monks have never done anything to me personally of which I can complain; but I cannot help saying, that no order of men is more perverse, and that it would be in vain to seek for any persons more worthless than they. Though secular priests are ever so wicked, they can never attain, in any respect, the wickedness of the friars: the artifices which the monks know how to employ to impose on the world are beyond all description.”*

l'amore, e che l'uomo e fatto per la donna e la donna per l'uomo.

* Ma dico che gente ribalda come ifrati non ce n'é. Per

Another nun makes the following declaration. She says with regard to the solicitations made to her by her confessor: "I testified to him the fear and scruples which they excited within me." He replied: "Must I tell you plainly? You are a precious simpleton. Follow my advice. Only try, and you will soon thank me for my lessons; be sure your scruples will cease." Whenever this same monk paid his visits to the convent he renewed his attempts to gain his object.

"When the Dominicans came among us to assist the sick they remained whole days together, and entered alone, under any pretence, into the chambers of certain nuns. They came every day to the grate, and never spoke to us but in disgusting language, revealing to us the confessions they had heard," &c. &c.

"There exists another cursed abuse, which is, that the nuns choose a husband among the monks when they have scarcely made their vows."

What appears most revolting in this affair of the convents, is the conduct and principles of two wicked nuns, who, infected with the abominable maxims of the Dominicans, had abandoned themselves more excessively than their female companions to the most revolting licentiousness—nay,

quanto i secolari sien cattivi, non gli arrivano in nessun geuere, e la furberia che hanno i frati presso al mundo e ai superiori non si può spiegar.

to the vilest profanation of what Catholics consider as most sacred.

The facts we relate are scandalous, no doubt; but the opprobrium recoils upon those who give occasion to such revelations by their acts, their culpable tolerance, fatal institutions, and practices likely to foment the passions and to corrupt innocence. It is by concealing iniquities of this kind from the knowledge of the public, and by securing impunity for them, under pretence of protecting religion, that they provoke instead of checking them. The example of chastisement being the most powerful bar that can be opposed to crime, it is allowing it to have its full swing when we do not inflict upon it publicly the punishment it deserves; a chastisement the more necessary as it is very difficult to get at the knowledge of the offence.

The interrogatory of the nuns and other persons who inhabited the convent of Saint Catherine of Prato, took place according to the orders of Leopold, and was composed of a commission appointed by Bishop Ricci. It was written entirely by the hand of Abbot Lorenzo Palli, the episcopal vicar of Prato, and was signed by all the female inhabitants of the convent, to the number of fifteen choral nuns, thirteen lay-sisters, and five boarders. We will not mention the irreligion, immorality, impiety, or heresy, of which the monks are accused

in this interrogatory—cases which very *seldom* occur in the tribunal of confession.

It results from the general depositions of almost all the nuns, that Sister Buonamici and Sister Spighi, the former aged fifty and the latter thirty-eight, had endeavoured to corrupt the nuns by indecent and obscene actions. More than half the nuns depose that Sister Buonamici had behaved scandalously with her own brother, an Augustin friar and priest, and that Sister Spighi had an intrigue with a certain Joam Botello, a Portuguese Jesuit.

Seven or eight years before, they had corrupted and enticed into their party three other nuns, one of whom was still a novice. They used to say to such as they wanted to deprave, that they had learned in mystic theology the doctrine which they taught them. It was, indeed, the books of ascetic meditation that had induced or authorised the irregularities of these wretched nuns: they made use of these books to lead their companions astray, and gave them a sensual interpretation. (For the sake of decency, and in order not to shock the reader, we beg to omit the rest of this interrogatory.)

It is difficult to people who are unacquainted with the spirit of those corporations, to imagine to what an excess the wickedness of the monks may be carried, or to conceive how such irregularities could have existed so long in Tuscany. Even

when they were brought to light by a virtuous prelate, the impudence of the monks was far from being disconcerted. They were seen to brave the authority of the bishop and that of the prince, to dissemble their crimes, and persevere in their abominable practices; and without Leopold's firmness in unveiling and prosecuting this mystery of iniquity, nothing could have put an end to it. The obstinate resistance made by these wretched nuns to the introduction of a more regular course of life, was owing to the perfidious counsels they received from the monks, who had accustomed them to a blind confidence and a boundless submission to their will. "They used to say," says the Bishop of Pistoia, "that, if they acted otherwise, they would have incurred the excommunication fulminated by the holy father Pius V.; and several of them were so strongly possessed with this fear, that one of them, being dangerously ill, never asked for the sacrament to be administered to her."

We find among the papers of Ricci a letter of a nun who expresses herself thus: "Who could ever imagine how far the spirit of address and intrigue of the monks can extend, or how many artifices, of all kinds, they have at their disposal, to resist every event: they are really astonishing. What! Pretend to struggle against the Sovereign himself! Every time I think of the trick of the provincial,

to make us take the communion, in order to oblige us afterwards to sign a certificate stating that we practise the sacraments, and that everything here is orderly, I cannot recover from my astonishment. Have not the monks made use of the medium of confession to discover what we had revealed about them in our depositions?"

Not satisfied with demoralising these poor nuns, the monks managed to be fed and kept by them, by getting from them all the money they had at their disposal: this is what we find from a denunciation made by two nuns of the convent of Saint Catherine of Pistoia to the Grand-Duke Leopold, who express themselves in these terms: "Most of the nuns deprived themselves of all their money and effects, and went without the very necessities of life, to enrich their lovers."

But what is not less revolting, is, that the Court of Rome, though informed of the scandalous immorality that existed in the convents of Tuscany, and long solicited to apply a remedy, refused to take, for this purpose, the means it had in its power, but maintained and protected the monks against all the denunciations brought against them. As late as 1774, Bishop Alamani had written in these terms to the conclave of the cardinals: "Almost all the nuns depose to the immorality and libertinism of their directors, to the material doctrine and brutal sentiments with which they en-

deavour to inspire them." The memorial or attestation of the nuns who complained of the infamous conduct of the monks had been handed to the cardinals by order of the bishop.

Ricci says, in his *Memoirs*, "that the Dominican nuns had several times, but always in vain, had recourse to the holy see and the superiors of their own order; but that they had never received a single word of consolation, or even an answer." He himself addressed a letter to Pope Pius V., in which he informs him of the irregularities that were taking place in the convents under the direction of the Dominicans. He expresses himself as follows in another letter to Cardinal Corsini: "When writing to the Pope, it is not meet that I should enter into all these infamous details which, if I communicated them to you, would fill you with horror. Yet, of what excesses have not those wicked Dominicans been guilty? The provincials and priors, instead of remedying so many irregularities, of which the confessors alone were the cause, have allowed these guilty confessors to have their own way, and they have plunged themselves into the same iniquities."*

* Eppure di che cosa sono stati capaci questi disgraziati domenicani? i provinciali, i priori, invece di remediare a tanti disordini dei confessori, o hanno lasciato, o hanno anche essi commesse le medesime iniquità.

The monks had so corrupted the minds and opinions of those nuns, and had so much influence over them, that the latter opposed for a long time an obstinate resistance to the measures taken by Ricci and the Grand Duke to put an end to this vileness: a resistance moreover encouraged by the court of Rome. "The monks, the nuncios," says Ricci, "and even the cardinal protector of the order, never ceased assuring them, either by letter, or through the medium of secret emissaries, that, if they remained firm, the tempest, with which they were threatened, would soon be dispelled."*

One of the means which had been employed to deprave by degrees these unfortunate nuns, was the reading and interpreting of those books of mysticism which they are accustomed to have read to young females in convents, to work their minds into a state of feverish excitement and fanaticism. We find in a letter of Mengoni, an abbot, that two nuns misused the works of the blessed Jean-de-la-Croix and other books on mystic theology, to entice into sin their fellow-nuns, novices, and boarders.†

* La lusinga in cui le tenevano i frati, il nunzio, o lo stesso cardinale protettore dell' ordine, che o per lettere o per mezzo di emissari le assicuravano, che quando esse fossero state ferme, in brevi si sarebbe dissipata la tempesta.

† E di altri libri di mystica theologia, per condurre al mal fare le consorelle, le novizie e l' educande.

These seducers passed from lectures to conversations, by which they gradually led the nuns astray, either during confession, or in the visits they paid them, even to the most immoral ideas, and thence to practices the most criminal. In short, we see, from several other declarations, that the habitual expressions and actions of those monks tended to corrupt the persons confined in the monasteries under their direction. We must not forget a means of corruption employed by the monks, that of the devotion paid to the *sacred heart of Jesus*, repeated every day to fanaticize the ignorant and credulous. It is right to make the public aware of what kind of superstition and immorality may be brought about by these absurd practices, at a time when the Jesuit-sacerdotal party is endeavouring to revive, for the purpose of enslaving the minds of the people, whatever the ignorance and superstition of the middle ages invented most contrary to the true sentiments and genuine principles of religion.

The abbot Longini wrote to the Bishop of Pistoia, on sending him two engravings representing the Saviour with his breast open and his heart in his hand, and said to him: "Here are the last spoils of the numerous errors of the nun Buonamici. The engravings, here inclosed, were given her by a Jesuit. She was so fond of them, and kept them so carefully, that she wore them

about her. I will not tell your lordship what abominable ideas she had attached to these pictures, &c.”*

The facts related in this chapter must demonstrate that the monkish system, together with that of confession, and a Jesuitical clergy, supported by the anti-national policy of the government, and by that of a clergy devoted to the court of Rome, are as pernicious to the purity of morals as to the tranquillity of families. We have seen, indeed, to what an extent depravity had spread, not only among the nuns, but also among the boarders who belonged to the first families of Tuscany. This is the fate which awaits those young persons whose improvident parents, blinded by prejudices or enticed by fashion, entrust the future lives of their children to these houses, which have been instituted and are directed according to principles of bigotry, superstition, and—what is worse—of Jesuitism. People may think that it is impossible for such serious irregularities to be introduced at the present day into female convents by means of confession. It is true, the influence of the secular and regular clergy, and that of the court of Rome, have not yet attained the necessary degree of power for such crimes to be committed with im-

* Io non diro a V. S. ill. R. l'idea abominevole che aveva attaccato a questa imagine.

punity, should they happen to be discovered. Besides, the freedom of the press would expose them, and stop their course. But it is not less certain that effects will result from this double system not less fatal to individuals than to the whole body of society. For, how can public vengeance reach crimes which, for the reasons we have pointed out, seldom or never come to their knowledge?

Moreover, the facts which have very lately transpired in France, as well as what has lately happened in Tuscany, prove that the evil, as we have just said, will not cease to exist, although the clergy have lost their ancient privileges, notwithstanding the abolition of special and secret jurisdictions, and a greater freedom of the press; and that, as long as that cause is not destroyed, its effects must necessarily be ever reproduced. If there be a country where people ought to be safe from such outrages it is France, and even Tuscany, where they have been divulged and branded with infamy in so solemn a manner. Yet, here is a fact, related by several newspapers in September, 1844:—

Crescioghi, an officiating priest in a parish of the Apennines, had been accused of outrages upon three young girls. He appeared before the tribunal of justice with the victims of his crime. Several witnesses inculpated the defendant in the

most serious manner. After having denied his crime with the greatest *sang-froid*, he at length avowed the principal fact, still denying, however, the aggravating circumstances. In accordance with the charge delivered by the public minister, the tribunal condemned Cresciogli to five years' seclusion in the Convent of Avergna, the ecclesiastical prison of Tuscany, and, moreover, to a banishment of twenty years.

CHAPTER V.

DEPRAVITY OF THE MONKS, THE CORRUPTERS
OF MORALS IN OTHER PARTS OF ITALY, BY
MEANS OF CONFESSION.

WE have related many scandalous facts in the course of this work; others will be found in this chapter which are not less so. It is painful to expose to public view such hideous and revolting descriptions; but great evils require strong remedies, especially at a moment when an attempt is making to cause institutions and practices so pernicious as monastic and sacerdotal confession to prevail in France. People must at length be made to know the consequences of such a system; public opinion must be sufficiently struck with the greatness of the evil to oppose a barrier to this torrent which threatens to invade everything.

We must at length warn the public against this confusion of precepts and pretended religious duties, and against institutions founded to maintain the power of a foreign domination.

We have derived the facts we are going to quote from the *procès-verbaux* of the Inquisition of a town in Italy, which were carried off at the time when the French, being masters of Italy, destroyed that tribunal. They have been communicated to us on condition of mentioning neither the name of the place nor that of the person from whom we have received them. We may judge from these facts, which happened in a small district, and in a rather short space of time, what are the immoral results of confession throughout Italy, and the excessive depravity of the monks. For, save a certain number of exceptions, we find among the corporations of that country the same principles and the same morals. We have reason to believe so, from the special informations we have derived at different periods, during a rather long residence in that classic land of monachism.

The registers of the Inquisition which have been communicated to us were very incomplete, and contained only the transactions of a few years. We have extracted from them what more particularly concerns temptation inherent in confession. What a mass of turpitude and infamy would be unveiled to the public, if it were possible to make

them acquainted with the facts recorded in the registers of the different counties where the Inquisition has been engaged in these inquiries! Add, moreover, a still more considerable number of facts, which take place between the guilty parties, without anybody ever being informed of them.

Here then is an extract of what has appeared to us the most remarkable, omitting entirely what concerns heresy, blasphemy, witchcraft, covenants and commerce with the devil, philtres to provoke love, freemasonry, treasure-finding, and other miserable practices, which betoken the ignorance, superstition, and stupidity of the monks and people.

A woman, thirty-seven years of age, named Bartolommea, the wife of a man named Bracolino, declared to the Inquisition that father Santozi, of the order of the Servites, had a very bad reputation, and lived very disorderly with a married woman.

She relates, moreover, that this monk, with others of his convent, habitually made use of licentious expressions to women.

A nun, named Ancilla Rei, of the order of Saint Francis, declared that she had been tempted, at the tribunal of confession, by the director of her convent, named Fortunato. He began with telling this nun that he loved her tenderly, and he used to call her his little dove, *nina Colomba*.

A nun, thirty years of age, named Illuminata Guidi, a claustral sister in a convent of Saint

Francis, said she had denounced, a few years before, to the tribunal of the Inquisition, a priest who had tempted her in the confessional for three years.

We see, from the declarations made by this girl, "for the acquittal of her conscience," as she terms it, to what a state seclusion and perpetual celibacy will reduce certain girls. This unfortunate creature avows that the passion that pervaded her being was so powerful within her, that, from the age of eighteen to twenty-nine, she had prayed on her knees all that time, recommending herself to the most holy Madonna, and saying *Ave Marias*, and *Pater Nosters*, to obtain her intercession for a purpose which may be understood without a more particular allusion to it.

Seeing that the prayers to the Virgin did not succeed, she applied to the devil, saying : *Diavolo, fammi venire qualche persona per peccare*. The devil hearkened to her prayers. But we will not detain the reader by relating all the things of which this unfortunate girl accuses herself before the Inquisition, and which are merely a mixture of the grossest superstition and the reveries of an imagination led astray by the knavery of the persons about her, and who conducted themselves towards her in a manner that I could not relate without offending propriety.

Margaret Monti, twenty-two years of age, de-

clares that the priest Turrini had tempted her in the confessional. This priest having been questioned, on the 22nd of June, 1791, answered that he had been a confessor in the convent of Saint Sebastian for three years, and that he had made overtures in the confessional, by word and deed, to sister Gertrude Fantini; that he had often kissed her through the grating of the confessional, and that he had commanded her to commit shameful actions. He accused himself also of having used licentious language to a woman named Ottavia Paolucci, every time she came to confess to him, which happened every week or fortnight: that he solicited her to love him by calling her endearing names, and by kissing her through the grating of the confessional; that all this took place before, during, and after confession; and, finally, that he had written her an immoral letter. He had also behaved in the same way to another woman named Margaret Monti.

A maid, aged thirty-three, named Giulia Mattioli, declares that her confessor, Felice, a monk, aged forty-five, had asked her several most indecent questions. (Here follow, in the original, more than twenty depositions of such a nature, that we would not dare to publish them in any language.)

We suppress several far more abominable facts of the same kind, which we have found in the

procès-verbaux of the Inquisition; being unwilling to detain the reader any longer in this monkish mire which we have been compelled to make him pass through, in order to give him something approaching an idea of the degree of corruption which exists but too often in both male and female convents.

In so doing, our chief purpose has been to make known the evils which may result from auricular confession, and the evils to which young persons of both sexes are exposed whose education is entrusted to monastic corporations. These examples, as well as those which I relate throughout this volume, and the induction which must be formed from them, as a proof of the existence of a great many other facts which pass in the shade of impenetrable secrecy, ought to induce parents to reflect seriously concerning the dangers to which they expose their children, in abandoning the direction of their consciences and education to associations which, on their re-establishment in France, have been impregnated, without exception, with the fatal principles of Jesuitism.

CHAPTER VI.

FATAL EFFECTS AND DANGERS OF CONFESSION
IN FRANCE, IN RELATION TO MORALS.

ITALY and Spain are not the only countries in Christendom where the seduction of females has been effected by means of confession. The same irregularities inherent in this institution have existed, though less generally, both in France and Germany. It is through the establishment of the Inquisition in the two former countries that we have been enabled to become acquainted with a few facts relative to this kind of seduction ; whence it evidently follows that it was not less common in localities about which we have no information of this nature. But what a hideous spectacle would be presented to our mind, were all the secret acts of this description brought to light which have been buried in profound darkness. The facts relative

to France, which we are about to relate, prove that our country has not been, at any period, free from this criminal outrage; that it is still exposed to it, and that it will not cease to be so, as long as auricular confession shall be in use. We shall find indubitable proofs of this, especially in the two following chapters.

Though this confession was not presented as sacramental in the ninth century, we nevertheless find a priest attempting, by temptation, to effect the ruin of a nun. It was on that occasion that Charles the Bald convoked, on the 13th of June, 874, a council at Douai, in which they proceeded against a priest, named Huntberg, accused of having been intimate with an abbess, named Douda. The council would not give evidence to the denial and oath of the culprit. His guilt was proved by letters he had written, and by the testimony of two nuns, the accomplices of Douda. He was punished in consequence, but secretly, to avoid scandal.*

Various councils held in the twelfth century pronounce pains and penalties against dissolute priests. If it was in vain they strove to abolish a custom that had long subsisted, and which stood in lieu of legal marriage, it was at least one way of preventing seduction. "In the time of the

* Concil. Galli., t. xiii., p. 414.

cardinal legate Jacques de Vitri, as it is reported in the *Antiquités de Paris*, the priests kept concubines; nay, on leaving their beds, they made no scruple of going to say mass." It was to find some new remedy for this usage, which had not ceased to exist, that canons were enacted, towards the end of the thirteenth century, to oblige confessors to reveal the sins and the names of the priests who kept concubines. This custom had been established in Spain as well as in other parts of Christendom, as may be seen from one of the articles of the councils held at Toledo, in 1302, which is in the following terms: "As certain ecclesiastics, as indifferent about their honour as their salvation, pass their lives in the most enormous dissoluteness, &c."*

Nicholas Clemagis, a secretary to Benedict XIII., who wrote about the year 1430, does not give a more flattering idea of the chastity of the clergy in his time, when he says, "the bishops of France permit curates, for a certain contribution, to keep concubines. Prepared in this manner," says he, "they present themselves at the altar." Clemagis gives a deplorable description of the disorderly and immoral conduct of all the ecclesiastical orders. "The canons," says he, "bring up publicly the children

* Quia clerici non nulli famæ suæ prodigi et salutis, in concubinato publice vitam ducunt enormiter dissolutam, &c.

of those whom they keep with them as their own wives." He calls the monks "devouring wolves," who, after cloying themselves, as well as women who are not their own, and children who belong to them, with wines and viands, riot in every kind of immorality. As to the convents of women, he describes them as follows:—"The monasteries of nuns are now no longer sanctuaries dedicated to the Deity, but execrable houses, dens of young immodest women, who only seek to satisfy their vile propensities. There is now no difference between making a young girl take the veil, and exposing her to the utmost degradation."

Now, we ask, what counsels—what direction in the path of virtue, could priests and monks so excessively corrupt, give to the persons who came to kneel at their feet at the tribunal of penitence? Let them boast to us now of the benefits and the moral improvement produced at all times by sacerdotal and sacramental confession, and still more of the spiritual grace of which it is the source!

The same corruption continued in France, and was propagated in the following centuries.

Henri Etienne, after speaking of the vileness that had prevailed before his time through the fatal effects of auricular confession, informs us that it had not diminished in his day: he gives several instances in proof of this, with which we are unwilling to disgust the reader, and then adds:

“Now, besides these instances, enough are seen every day, in which it is sufficiently apparent that auricular confession serves priests and monks for snares wherewith to entrap women.”

He accuses them even of infanticide, and quotes a contemporary author in these terms : “ Pontanus also relates an example of this infamous cruelty, which,” he says, “is much more common with nuns than with others.”

The same corruption was propagated and continued in France during the following century. A female relative of Cardinal Berulle, having become *enciente* in a Carmelite convent, notwithstanding the rigorous discipline of that order, the Jesuits, who, perhaps, were alone guilty, cast this crime on the cardinal. It was at nearly the same period that those events took place in the convent of the Ursulines at Louvain, to which we shall devote one of the following chapters.

Here is an anecdote about thirty years younger, related by Bussy Rabutin : it demonstrates to what a degree of infamy the intimacy of the priests with women had attained. “Last Thursday,” says Rabutin, “they arrested two priests, one of whom, named *Le Sage*, said that a young lady, who is even now at the Bois (Château) de Vincennes, having fallen in love with Rubantel, had come to him to ask for secret means to make him love her. A fortnight after, she had come to

him to complain that Rubantel was still indifferent towards her. He had then told her that something *more* must be added to the sacrifice: and the lady performed all these ceremonies."

Saint Simon speaks of another disorderly impostor, a director of women, who was appointed, about the year 1700, on account of his talents and his piety, to succeed Rancé in the abbey of La Trappe. "He wrote," says Saint Simon, "to a nun: his letter was a tissue of the most villanous things imaginable, the grossest in name—vile terms of endearment of a reckless and immoral monk, which would make the most abandoned tremble: their expectations, regrets, hopes—everything was stated in the plainest and most unreserved language. I do not believe that more abominable expressions are vented in several days in the vilest places."

But we have seen enough of past times. Let us now see whether confession be less dangerous with a clergy of recent formation.

Before speaking of the actions of *curé* Minigret, which wear a character of sacrilege and atrocity to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in ancient or modern history; we will mention, besides the facts already quoted in the other chapters of this work, several *subornations* which have come to the knowledge of the public in the course of legal investigation.

Everybody knows the crimes of *Contraffatto* and *Lacolonge*, as well as those of *Billet*, vicar of Gex (in Ain), condemned to ten years' confinement for having made a bad use of confession, and alleging, by way of excuse, that "Saint Augustin had done much worse than he." The newspapers have spoken of that other priest, named *Roubignac*, who used to invite girls to his house, and had fascinated one of them, aged nineteen, by the means of confession, and in the hope of her salvation, so far as to cover her body with hair-cloth furnished with iron-points, which had almost reduced this unfortunate creature to the point of death, through the dreadful sufferings he made her endure; a means he had employed in order to commit the most base actions. Will it be believed that so criminal a person, when his infamous treatment of this young girl had excited public indignation, was able to find an asylum in the house of the Jesuits at Toulouse!

What shall we say of another officiating priest, named *Jenny*, who, banished from several dioceses, on account of the depravity of his morals, had been declared guilty of violating chastity, and who had the impudence to plead in excuse that his crime had not been committed in the exercise of his sacerdotal duties? Other facts of the same kind might be quoted; but it is important to make known, in all its details, the crime of Mingrat,

who avoided the penalty of death due to his offence, through the protection of the government, and that of the clergy, and whom, for this reason, they allowed to escape.

Paul Courier has described, with as much truth as talent, the whole of this atrocious affair, which we will now copy textually from his writings:—

“His name is Mingrat; and he was scarcely more than twenty, when, on leaving the seminary, he was made curate of Saint-Opre, a village six leagues from Grenoble. There, his zeal was immediately displayed against dancing and every kind of amusement. He forbade, or caused to be forbidden, by the mayor and under-prefect, who durst not refuse, all assemblies, balls, rural festivals, and caused the *cabarets* to be shut, not only during divine service, but—so they say—the whole of Sundays and on holidays.

“But Abbé Mingrat would not suffer a bare arm to appear at church; nay, he could not, without horror, suspect the form of a female from the shape of her dress. Partial to the good old time, moreover, he preached on ancient manners, restoration and restitution, at the age of twenty, fulminating against dancing and short sleeves. People in office supported him, the higher classes encouraged him, and the people listened to him, as did also the *gendarmes* and the *garde-champêtre*, who never failed to attend his sermon. In a

word, he wished, with the assistance of his superiors, to re-establish the purity of the *ancien régime*. The better to succeed, he formed in the house of his aunt, who had come with him to Saint-Opre, a school for little girls, whom she taught to read, instructing and preparing them for the communion. He was present at the lessons, and directed the instruction.

“Two of them, nearly fifteen years of age, seemed to attract his particular attention. He invited them to his house, a distinction coveted by all their companions, and flattering to their parents. These girls go, therefore, to the house of the young curate. For some years past, this has been done everywhere, both in town and country; the magistrates approve of it, and honest people augur from it the revival of good morals. So they often went there together or singly: it was to listen to Christian lectures, to repeat the catechism or learn verses, psalms, and orisons; they went so often, that, at length, one of them fell ill.

“Read history, Mr. Anonymous, and compare the past with the present. For my part, I do nothing else, it is the best study in the world. I find that, in the days of our father, Guillaume Rosé, a curate of a parish in Paris, catechised young girls who used to meet in a lady’s house in order to receive pious lessons. There, among

others, came constantly the only daughter of the President de Neuilly, a girl thirteen or fourteen years of age, who soon became *enciente*. In times of good works, such an accident happened without much attention being paid to it, when girls had not a president for their father. The latter brought an action; Guillaume was sentenced; but the clergy interfered. Justice has never fair play against the clergy, who first of all will not be judged by it, and at that time could lead the people at pleasure. Guillaume laughed at parliament, president, and daughter, and was made Bishop of Senlis, devoted to the pope—his creator, as they say at Rome.

“There is another fact of the same kind, less ancient, but horrible, and thereby more similar to Mingrat’s offence. Not forty years ago, some young ladies were brought up in a convent near Nogent-le-Rotrou, under the direction of a saintly man, a *prêtre-abbé*, who confessed, taught, and catechised them for many years, without any suspicion being raised against him. But, at length, it was discovered that he had seduced several of them, and that, when the situation of any one was likely to prove the means of exposing him, he poisoned her, watched her, and kept everybody away, under pretence of confession or dying exhortations, never leaving her till she was dead, coffined, and buried. Such facts seldom come to

the knowledge of the public. This saintly personage was secretly removed and confined according to the custom of that period. Let us return to the Abbé Mingrat.

“The girl was likely to become a mother. Not knowing what to do, and afraid of her mother, she went to confess to the curate of a neighbouring village—a man very different from Mingrat. He allowed dancing, and paid no attention to short sleeves. The poor child told him her misfortune, and, refusing to declare who was the cause of it, would accuse herself alone. ‘But, my dear,’ said the curate, ‘is he a married man?’ ‘No.’ ‘You must marry him.’ ‘Impossible!’ She was mistaken; for who can prevent a man from marrying, if unmarried, or from making a wife of her whom he has made a mother? What law forbids it? or what morality? She, poor child, ought to have said, ‘God, men, reason, nature, the Gospel, and religion, require it; but the Pope will not allow it; and, on that account, I die—for that I am lost.’ But scarcely did she reply, rather with sobs than words, to the question of this good curate, who at last, however, succeeded in making her name the Abbé Mingrat. The same evening he went and spoke to him. The other was angry at the first word, and railed furiously against the wickedness of the age, accusing Voltaire and Rousseau, philosophy, and the corruption of the

revolution. The good man tried all in vain; he could get nothing else out of him. A few days after, the girl disappeared, without either her friends or relations being able to hear anything of her. An inquiry was made in every direction, but long in vain; at length she was no longer thought of. Such was the first part of Mingrat's history.

“Part the second is known from the public papers, where you may have seen how, in consequence of reports in circulation, he was transferred from Saint Opre to the curacy of Saint Quentin. This is their discipline. When a priest has caused scandal in any place he is sent elsewhere. In serious cases only he is suspended *a sacris*—forbidden for a time to say mass. But, if justice should interfere, the clergy protest immediately; for no one can judge the anointed. The Abbé Gelée, an ex-Capuchin, and the curate of Pezai, in Poitu, having committed a gross and glaring fault against his vow of chastity, justice was mute in spite of every complaint. He was removed to where he now is. He does not, however, seem to have grown more virtuous, any more than the Abbé Mingrat, who, redoubling his austerity in his new parish, made war more than ever against dancing and short sleeves. A certain devotee, young and handsome, and married early to a turner, took him for a confessor, and often saw him

at her own house—without it being talked of however—for she was reputed very virtuous. One evening, when she had come rather late to confess, he detained her a long time, and then sent her to see his aunt, who lived with him, but whom he knew to be absent and not expected to return that day; then, starting by a different road, he got there before the young woman, went in, and when she arrived, made her enter. What then took place no one knows. He carried her out dead to a grotto near the village, where he cut her up into pieces with a pocket-knife—he cast them one by one into the Rivere Isère. These fragments, found some time after floating upon the water, were put together and recognised, as was also the bloody knife, left behind by him in the grotto. Then it was they remembered the girl of Saint Opre.

“You know also how he escaped every pursuit, which, had it not been for the mayor, would never have taken place. By the mayor alone all the facts were stated and published, in spite of bigots and the clergy, who would not allow it to be mentioned. Such has been their maxim in every age. ‘Should a priest happen,’ says Fenelon, ‘to commit a fault, people ought modestly to cast down their eyes and remain silent.’ But the report of such an atrocious crime having quickly spread, suspicion was attempted to be cast upon another person.

Even a grand-vicar of Grenoble, the Abbé Bo-chard, preached a sermon expressly upon rash judgments, saying, 'Brethren, beware! such a one may appear to you guilty, who is obliged by his duty, though it cost him his honour and life, to remain silent upon the crime of another; and malice is so great in this age, that to appear innocent, people do not cease to calumniate and traduce the most honourable people.' It was the woman's husband whom they insinuated thereby to be the real murderer, and the curate as a martyr to the secrecy of confession. This pious forgery, supported by all the saintly cabal, would, perhaps, have succeeded and beguiled the public, had it not been for the Mayor of Saint Quentin, who, being neither a bigot nor devoted to them, but simply an honest man, forced justice to act in consequence of his investigations. The curate was not arrested, because the Lord has said, 'Touch not mine anointed.' Condemned by default, he retired to Savoy, where he now passes for a saint and performs miracles. They make pilgrimages to him from the valley, and from the mountain; they all flock to him, especially the women, to see him, and implore his benediction. That hand blesses them; he holds forth that hand, which is kissed by women and girls, without thinking, without trembling, yet knowing what he has done; for, the place being so near, nobody is ignorant of it. But they forgive him

much, because he has loved much; or, perchance, he repents, and then he is more worthy than ninety-nine of the just. Should he again confess some pretty young woman, and she resist him, he will serve her as he did the others, without losing paradise on that account. Saint Bos had killed both father and mother. Saint Mingrat kills only his mistresses, and afterwards does penance."

It would be impossible to describe the dangers of sacerdotal confession in more lively colours, or with a more logical argument, than Paul Courier has done in the following extract, which will, doubtless, be read again with pleasure. These are his expressions:—

"What a life, indeed, is that of our priests! what a condition! Love, and especially marriage, are forbidden them; yet women are given up to them! They may not have one, but they may live familiarly with them all. This is but little; but their confidence, their intimacy, the secrecy of their private actions, of all their thoughts! The innocent little girl, under the maternal wing, hears, from the first, the priest, who soon calling her, converses with her apart; who, first, before she can err, speaks to her of sin. When schooled, he marries her; when married, he still confesses and governs her. He precedes the husband in her affections, and ever stands his ground. What she dares not confide to her mother, or avow to her husband,

a priest must know: he demands, and knows it; yet will he not be her lover. Indeed, how could he be? Is he not in holy orders? He hears a young woman whispering to him her faults, feelings, wishes, weaknesses; he inhales her sighs, without feeling any emotion; and he is five-and-twenty!

“Confess a woman! imagine what it is. Quite at the bottom of the church stands a kind of wardrobe, or watch-box, fixed against the wall on purpose, wherein this priest—not Mingrat, but some honest man—I will grant, well-behaved and pious, such as I have known, but still a man and young—they are almost all so—is waiting in the evening, after vespers, for the young penitent whom he loves; she knows it: love cannot hide from the person loved. Here you will stop me: his character as a priest, his education, his vow . . . I tell you, the vow has nothing to do with it; every village curate, on leaving the seminary, healthy, young, and active, loves, beyond all doubt, one of his parishioners. It cannot be otherwise; and if you contest the point, I will tell you more—he loves them all, at least those of his own age; but he prefers one, who seems to him, if not handsomer than the others, more modest, more prudent, and whom he would marry; he would make her a virtuous, pious wife, were there no pope. He sees her every day, meets her at church or elsewhere;

and sitting facing her during the long evenings in winter, he imprudently quaffs the poison of her eyes.

“Now, pray tell me, when he hears that young girl on the morrow approaching the confessional—when he knows her step, and can say ‘there she is!’—what is passing in the heart of the poor confessor? Honesty, duty, wise resolutions, are here of little service, without some especial grace from heaven. I suppose him a saint: unable to fly, he groans aloud; his father recommends him to God; but if he be only a man, he trembles, and, in spite of himself—perhaps without knowing it—he already hopes. She comes, and kneels to him—to him whose heart is beating and throbbing. You are young, sir, or have been young; now, between ourselves, what think you of such a situation? Alone, mostly, without any other witnesses than those walls and vaulted roofs, they converse—of what? Alas! of everything that is not innocent. They speak, or rather whisper, and their mouths are close to each other: they breathe each other’s breath! That lasts an hour or more, and is often renewed.

“Think not I invent. This scene has taken place, and throughout France, exactly as I have described it; it is renewed every day by forty thousand young priests with as many girls whom they love, because they are men; whom they con-

fess in this way, converse with, *tête à tête*, visit, because they are priests, but do not marry, because the pope opposes it. The pope pardons them everything, save marriage, and would rather have priests adulterers, unchaste, debauched, assassins, like Mingrat, than married. Mingrat kills his mistresses; he is defended from the pulpit: here they preach for him; there they canonize him: but if he married one—what a monster! He would never find an asylum. Good and speedy justice would be done, not forgetting the mayor who married them. But what mayor would be so bold?

“Now, sir, reflect, and see whether it be possible even to combine in the selfsame person two more contrary things than the duty of the confessor and the vow of chastity: what must be the fate of those poor young men, between the prohibition of possessing what nature impels them to love, and the obligation of conversing intimately, confidentially, with the objects of their love; whether, in a word, this monstrous combination be not enough to drive some raving mad, and to make others—I do not say guilty, for the really guilty are those who, being magistrates, suffer young men to confess young girls—but criminals, and all extremely miserable. In this matter I know their secrets.

“At Leghorn, I became acquainted with Cardi-

nal Fortini, perhaps still living, one of the scholars of Italy, and one of the most honest men in the world. Connected with him at first by our common studies, and afterwards by mutual affection, I saw him frequently, and, by some accident or other, I happened one day to ask him whether he had kept his vow of chastity. He assured me that he had; and I think he spoke the truth on that subject as on everything else. "But," added he, "I would not pass through such trials again, to be made a young man of twenty!" He was then seventy. "God knows how I suffered, and will, I hope, set it to my account; but I would not go through it again." That is what he told me; and I noted his language so well in my memory, that I remember his very words.

"At Rocca di Papa, I lodged with the vicar, in whose house I fell ill. He showed me great attention, and took that opportunity to speak to me of God, of whom I thought more, and more often than he, but in a different manner. He wanted to convert me—'to save me,' as he said. I listened to him with pleasure; for he spoke Tuscan, and was one of the finest speakers of that divine language. At length I recovered; we became friends, and, as he would still be preaching to me, I said to him: 'Dear Abbé, to-morrow I will confess; if you will marry and live happy, you can only be so with a wife, and I know the

one you admire. You see her every day, you love her, you are dying for her.' He laid his hand on my mouth, and I saw his eyes were full of tears. Since then, I have heard very strange things related of him, which reminded me of what I had read about Origen.

"Such is the misery to which they are reduced by their woful condition. But why, you will say, does a man turn priest, when susceptible of such impressions? Sir, do you think they make themselves what they are? Brought up from their infancy by the papal militia, they are seduced, and enlisted; they pronounce that abominable impious vow—never to have a wife, a family, or a home—when they hardly know its meaning, when young novices, and, therefore, excusable; for a man who would take this vow, thoroughly understanding it, ought to be seized, imprisoned, or transported far away to some desert island. This vow made, they are anointed, and cannot unsay it; but if the engagement were for a term of years, how few would renew it! Girls and women are immediately given up to them to govern. The sulphur and brimstone are brought to the fire; for the fire has promised, so they say, not to burn. Four thousand young men have the gift of continency, invested with their gowns, and are, henceforth, as if they had no longer either sex or bodies! Do you credit it? Sober some may be—

if he may be called sober who combats nature. A few triumph; but how few, compared with those whom grace abandons in such temptations? Grace is the lot of few, and fails even the righteous man. How can they, so young, in all the ardour of youth, have this gift, when old men have it not?

“The Parisian curate, whom Vautrin, the upholsterer, having surprised with his wife, killed and threw out of window, a few years ago (the adventure is well-known in the *quartier du Temple*, though hushed up on account of the clergy); that curate was sixty years old, and he of Pézai is sixty-eight; this did not, however, prevent him, very lately, from consorting with a low beggar-girl. He made her his mistress—another affair hushed up by the credit of the anointed; for the father brought an action, finding his daughter *enciente*, but the Church interfered. Think you that he who cannot, at that age, abstain from vice, could, at the age of twenty or twenty-five, have governed innocent lovely creatures? If you have a daughter, sir, commit her to the protection of the soldier, the hussar, who is able to marry her, rather than to these seminarists. How many affairs to be hushed up would there be, if all that passes in secrecy had glaring consequences, or if there were many mayors like him of Saint Quentin. What horrors appear even from such facts

as transpire, in spite of the connivance of the magistrates, the measures taken to prevent every kind of publicity, the silence imposed on such matters, and—without even speaking of crimes—what sources of immorality, debauchery, and corruption, are those two papal inventions the celibacy of priests and auricular confession! What harm they do! How much good do they prevent! Look and admire where the family of the priest is a model for all the others, where the pastor teaches nothing but what he can show in himself when speaking to fathers or husbands, giving the example with the precept. There, women are not so imprudent as to tell a man their sins; the clergy is not independent of the people, the state, and the law;—all abuses established among us in times of the most stupid barbarism and the most cruel ignorance, and hard to maintain in these days, when the world reasons and everybody can count his fingers.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIAL OF ELIZABETH BAVENT, A NUN OF THE CONVENT OF SAINT ELIZABETH DE LOUVIERES, SEDUCED IN THE TRIBUNAL OF CONFESSION. CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

NEVER did a prosecution present scenes in which ignorance, superstition, and immorality, were more grossly conspicuous than that brought against the convent of Saint Elizabeth de Louviers, but principally against Elizabeth Bavent, a victim alike of the directors who had been inflicted on her, and of the unchaste nuns of that convent. We find in this trial a series of facts, denunciations, and testimony, in which abominable priests are the chief performers, and a young, pious, virtuous maiden is corrupted and becomes the victim of guilt. Corruption of the confessors, credulous bigotry on the part of the accused, barbarous pre-

judices of the judges, and of the civil and religious authorities,—such were the component parts of this affair. All these iniquities were, as we shall see, the result of sacerdotal confession, practised in a house where fifty nuns were secluded; such is the evident result of this trial, which re-echoed, near two hundred years ago, throughout Europe, and which, though forgotten in these days, deserves, nevertheless, to be known by such as seek to observe the effects produced on weak minds, on the ignorance and credulity of early years, by doctrines stamped with error and superstition. We find here, moreover, a new proof of the evils which are the too common result of the practice we oppose.

The transactions of this trial are recorded in a work on the *Possession* of the Nuns of Saint Elizabeth de Louviers,* published by an ignorant, superstitious, and fanatical friar. It is at the end of this volume that we meet with some official pieces, and, among others, the Confession of Elizabeth Bavent, written by herself, whence we have derived the most remarkable details of this affair. But, before producing them, it is important to

* *La Piété affligée, ou discours historique et théologique de la possession des religieuses dites de Sainte-Elizabeth de Louviers; divisé en trois parties, par le R. P. Esprit du Bosroger, provincial des R. R. P. P. capucins de la province de Normandie.* Rouen, 1652, in 4°.

speak of some events in her life, and her misfortunes.

Elizabeth Bavent, born at Rouen, lost her parents in her ninth year. Her uncle placed her with a laundress, with whom she remained for three years. All the documents equally assert that her conduct throughout that period was irreproachable. Her character, the turn of her mind, and still more the suggestions of her early confessors, inspired her with a taste for a devout life, and the desire of attaining perfection. For this purpose, she resolved to retire from the world. She had conceived so high an opinion of the order of Saint Francis, that she determined to enter the convent of Saint Elizabeth de Louviers. She left it, soon after, in consequence of the disgust and aversion she felt at the vile practices of the nuns, in which she was forced to participate. But the irresistible preference she entertained for Saint Francis induced her to return to his convent. "If I were not so timid," says she in her confession, "I would blame my devotion to the order of Saint Francis—at least I believe it was indiscreet, excessive, and scrupulous. I was obstinately bent on belonging to some convent that followed his rules. . . . Such was one of the sources of my misfortunes, and I think that after I had abandoned God, by acting contrary to his inspirations, he abandoned me to myself, to follow my indiscretion;

for in spite of my relations, and without paying any attention to the advice that was given me by several persons, I was determined to remain as a nun of the turning-box."

She was handed over to two confessors, who, under pretence of perfection and an intimate union with God, fascinated her mind so far as to make her believe that the actions which they prevailed upon her, as well as upon the other nuns to commit, were by no means contrary to piety and religion. "I was so far good," she said at times, when she reflected upon what was required of her, "that my revolted conscience was sensible of my miseries, and I used to reproach myself for all that passed between Picard (the name of her second confessor) and myself."

This unfortunate, simple, and credulous girl, whose mind was transported to the most extravagant devotion, was hurried away by her boundless confidence and her blind submission to the most nefarious of wretches, into the most shameful proceedings, and even into a belief in the practices of magic, professed by her directors. She speaks, in her confession, of a donation she had made of her body to the devil, at the suggestion of that villanous Picard. But what proves a fund of purity and candour in her soul is, that while openly avowing her errors and faults, she attributes them to herself, though they were entirely

owing to the directors who had been imposed upon her. "I state them here (in her confession) in order to confound myself the more, and the better to make known my horrible wickedness." In another place she describes the dreadful position in which she was kept. "No one in the house was ignorant of that man's attachment to me, of his privacy, or of my frequent visits to his room at his instance. . . . But the nuns turned a deaf ear, and would never allow me to go and confess elsewhere, though I entreated them, in the hope that an honest man might find a remedy for my poor conscience, and tell me what I had to do. For this I neither ought nor wish to excuse myself, by so trifling and frivolous a reason, though indeed they would have accused me as of a great crime, had I been to any other confessor, inasmuch as this would have been revealing the whole secret of the monastery. No, I myself, either from stupidity or inclination, am the cause of my own irregularities, from which a prudent charitable confessor would easily have redeemed me."

The tranquillity and resignation with which she bore the calumny, ill-treatment, and sufferings inflicted upon her by the nuns and her confessors, are beyond all praise. On their refusing her even the most necessary things in her malady and sufferings, she exclaims: "and as I deserve to be in hell, the place due to my faults, can I com-

plain that they do wrong, when they refuse me any little comforts in my affliction?"

Under the weighty calumny and false accusations brought against her, whilst the proceedings of the nuns of Louviers were in progress, Elizabeth Bavent determined to write and publish her confession, conformably to the opinion of an honest priest who had been given her by the penitentiary of Rouen, and could sympathise in her misfortunes. This unfortunate girl had to struggle, not only against the confessors of the convent and the nuns whom they had corrupted, but also against the monks and a great part of the clergy, who had leagued with the devotees, led astray by their intrigues. For the sake of saving guilty confessors from punishment, and for the honour of confession, they did not hesitate to provoke, by their intrigues and by infamous means, the condemnation of a girl whose errors and irregularities were occasioned by the directors, who made her the instrument of their vileness.

"This is," she says, "what I lay before the court in this paper, where I have separated the truth from falsehood, to serve as it may please God, before whom I protest I have nothing else to say. If I endeavour to accompany it with some sentiments of sorrow and humiliation, which are imparted to me by Jesus Christ, I do only my duty; and I pray Him to give me more. But I

am very sure that I speak in the most sincere and faithful manner possible, and as I spoke when I made my last confession to prepare myself for execution. So, never have I opened my mouth to declare what is here recorded, without first invoking, on my knees, the Holy Ghost, which is the spirit of truth."

She complains "of the nuns of Louviers accusing her of having been led astray by a Franciscan named Bontamps, at the time she was with the laundress; of having been very often conducted to the infernal *sabbat*, with other girls; of having been married to the devil Dagon, under the form of a young man." She says she has no knowledge of the facts imputed to her, and that she has consulted the confessor she had at that time, who assures her there was no such thing; but that, on the contrary, she was at that age remarkable for her piety, and that her old companions bore witness to the propriety of her conduct at that period. She adds that the nuns of Louviers had brought this accusation against her in order to cause her to be considered by weak minds as a girl who was already a witch or magician when she first went to the monastery, and had caused their afflictions. . . . "But I vow before God, and call Him who will be my chief judge to witness, that I was pure when I asked them to receive me. I heartily wish I was in the same condition as when I went in."

“She found,” she says, “debauchery established in the convent. David, who directed us all, was a horrible priest, and quite unworthy of so divine and holy a profession. He used to read to us the ‘*Book of the Will of God*,’ composed by a Capuchin friar, which, at that time, served for our particular and only rule in the establishment; but he explained it in a strange manner, which was nevertheless approved of, and followed by the mothers who governed us. This bad man and dangerous priest, under pretence of introducing perfect obedience, which ought to extend even to what is most difficult and repugnant to nature, introduced abominable practices, by which God has been dishonoured and insulted in an extraordinary manner. Can I dare even to name them? He used to say that we ought to exterminate sin by sin, to return to innocency and resemble our first parents, who were not ashamed of their nudity. Under this seeming language, what impurities and disgusting actions did they not cause to be committed? Those nuns were considered the most holy, perfect, and virtuous, who stripped, and danced, or appeared in the choir, and went to the garden in that state. This is not all: they accustomed us to do what I dare not relate,* to commit the most hor-

* The translator has been obliged to curtail several sentences in this chapter for reasons already mentioned.

rible and infamous sins, which my confessor told me had been remarked by Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, as having been instances of the most excessive immorality during the reign of the prince of hell among the Pagans.* I have seen them profaning the most holy sacrament of the altar, which was at the disposal of the nuns. What penance must they have recourse to, in order to obtain pardon for so many and such horrible crimes !

“To tell the truth, I felt an unaccountable aversion to these infamous practices, and I would not always do what they required of me. But I accordingly was considered a disobedient, rebellious, obstinate, proud, head-strong girl. Would to God I had been more so ! it would have been better for my soul, and I should not then have committed so great a number of offences. Once especially I resisted much about taking the communion, stript to my waist. I was, however, forced to do so, and as I endeavoured to cover myself at least with the communion table-cloth, Pierre David (the principal author of all this, and who had commanded the matrons to do so on my account) made me lay it down ; and, again, as I tried to cover myself with my hands, which were free, he commanded me to join them. This was a horrible proceeding, of which I could not help complaining to those who had forced me to it. I believe that was the prin-

* Epistle to the Rom., ch. i., v. 26.

cial cause of my being sent away, which was so far from grieving me, that I was delighted, from the hope I had of properly confessing my sins, a thing which I was not allowed to do; for, during the twenty months I remained there, I had never succeeded in making a good and entire accusation of my faults. David would not allow us to accuse ourselves of the immoralities introduced there, telling us they were not transgressions. It was in vain I asked the mistress of the novices for a priest; she replied in the same terms, and was one of the adepts in that school.”

In speaking of that abominable priest named David, she says: “It was not with him that I most offended God; for nothing at all criminal ever passed between him and me, and the only liberties he took consisted in indecent familiarities.

“After David’s death, I remained at the turning-box for at least nine months more, and Picard was appointed confessor and director of the house in his stead. On Easter-day, I presented myself before him that he might hear my confession, delighted with the liberty I had of telling him everything that had passed, and of revealing to him the recesses of my conscience; but I fell, as the saying is, ‘out of the frying-pan into the fire.’ As soon as I appeared before him, and began to declare my faults, he would not listen to me; he

would speak on any other subject, and told me that all I was confessing was not offending God. He testified the most violent affection, and entreated me to return it: he then tried to embrace me. All the confessions I made to him afterwards were like the former, and were still more sacrilegious and damnable; for they consisted of warm expressions and illicit privacy. Good God! what an abuse of sacrament, and even if I had not committed any other sin than that, how much should I deserve to be chastised in this world and in the other!

“That wretch persisted in persecuting me, and his impudence was so great that during an illness, from which I thought I should have died, he did not discontinue his improper behaviour, though I was almost senseless, and more dead than alive. This shows to what one may be led by a blind and unbridled passion.”

The intercourse which Picard had with Bavent having been made known in the town of Louviers, and Picard fearing she might be soon a mother, besides the greater facility of concealing his crime in that case, were the reasons which induced the confessor to get her back to the convent. Thus it was she ceased to be *tourière* (or keeper of the turning box). “So there I was,” she continues, “for the second time, nun in the same convent,

where I found the same practices, related elsewhere, even more firmly established ; for the mistress of the novices passionately delighted in them ; and I had scarcely returned when they obliged me to follow them I am very sure that I returned to the house to my great misfortune, and that my excessive affection for Saint Francis had been injurious to me. I ought to have remembered what I had seen there, and to have chosen some ordinary livelihood in the world. Few persons will excuse me, and I know not whether our Lord himself will deign to excuse me, since that return has been the cause of my ruin, and I find myself very criminal in his presence.”

This Picard had imagined different practices of witchcraft to lead the nuns to his purpose, and used to make them believe in the superstitions of magic : he introduced them, with all kinds of ceremonies and illusions, into a place where they fancied they were at the infernal *sabbat*. “The place where this sabbat was held,” says Bavent, “is unknown to me ; I know not whether I was taken away far or not from the monastery The assembly there was not numerous : I perceived only priests and nuns, very seldom any lay persons.” We may judge to what point they had fascinated the mind of this girl, and what was the deceit of these priests, from reading the following

passages: "All the actions I saw performed at the sabbat are infamous; I cannot think of them without shuddering. . . . I must confess that if the saintly friars of God commit extraordinary actions, the cursed friars of the devil are not to be outdone by them. Certainly, such actions deserve rather to be forgotten than to be related. But, as I am here making my general confession, I ought not to be silent upon one of their most enormous crimes."

It would be too long to relate the effect that Picard had produced by his practices and impostures upon the mind of the credulous Bavent. He had caused her to make a covenant with the devil, and had persuaded her to give him her soul and body. "My crime," says she on this subject, "is the more enormous, that it has been repeated several times; and though it is the pure truth that it was Picard who pressed and urged me to do all those things, and dictated them to me word by word, nevertheless I ought not to excuse myself on that account, nor diminish in that way the gravity of my crime. I believe, nevertheless, that the wretch had bewitched me, for, whilst writing them, I know not how I was, and I scarcely knew myself."

In these nocturnal meetings called the sabbat, she represents Jesus Christ and the Holy Virgin as punishing the sacrilege and crimes that were committed there. "Lastly," says she, "Boulé,

Picard's vicar, once had my company in that place, by the order and command of Picard, who said it was necessary that it should be so."

We find throughout an honest pious heart in this girl, even amid the horrible immorality, superstition, and sacrilege into which she had been led by her credulity and confidence in abominable directors. "Can any one read, without astonishment," she exclaims, "all I have stated here? O Lord! how keenly I feel the need of thy great mercy to obtain pardon for such grievous sins. O Lord! thy great mercy is absolutely necessary to me; for even though I did not always participate in the extraordinarily impious and wicked doings I have just related, I was present at them all, and have so far shared in them as I have stated; then have compassion on me."

The nuns, who were afraid lest Bavent should reveal the iniquities that were practised in their convent, and in which they participated, refused to give her any other confessor than the one they themselves employed, and who maintained them in a state of depravity: these were principally the first two superiors, with the mistress of the novices: not only did they subject her to every species of vexation, but they accused her on the trial of having introduced into the convent everything that was contrary to religion and morality. "I was," says she, "aware of all that was going on in

the establishment, and I abhorred those nuns who had led me into infernal practices. . . . If the court could take the trouble to examine everything diligently, and God would bless the enterprise, strange mysteries would be discovered. But let it do as it thinks proper.”

The Bishop of Evreux repaired to her convent, and she confessed her sins to him: in consequence of the scandalous reports circulated against her, “he ordered her to be unveiled and divested of her religious dress, without any other examination or proof. He commanded the nuns to visit her and cut off her hair: which they were very willing to do.”

She afterwards complains of the ill-treatment to which they subjected her. “I can never call to mind the miserable treatment I received, without being sensible of it still. How wretched it is to say that they refused me even a bit of linen to put to my ulcerated breast, which caused me insufferable pain, and that I heard with my own ears: ‘*Let the wretch die if she will!*’ I confess it calls forth tears from my eyes and sighs from my heart.....But can I complain, as if they had done wrong, when they refused these little comforts?” Not only were they not contented with making this unfortunate creature suffer such cruel treatment, which she supported with so much courage and resignation, but she was a victim of the in-

human treatment of a bishop, whom, however, she commends, yet who, after having been her confessor for fifteen months, "pronounced against me," so she tells us, "upon the calumnious testimony of a nun, a sentence by which he condemned me to remain a prisoner all my life, to fast three days in the week on bread and water, and this upon the simple deposition of a girl who spoke at one time like a saint, at another like a demoniac. His sentence was too slight, with respect to my previous faults, but too hasty, considering the deeds for which he gave it; since, by the grace of God, I believe I am quite innocent of them, and in God's truth I think I have never caused any harm to the establishment."

Poor Bavent was put in prison, first for four days in a subterraneous dungeon, in consequence of the denunciation of the same nun to the chief almoner. This man had been given to her as her confessor, though he had proved himself to be her enemy. After having confessed her and administered the communion, he asked her denunciator what Bavent had done with the consecrated wafer? She replied "that I had sent it, by devils, to the establishment of Louviers, to strengthen them all in their demoniacal possessions. He must have known that this could not be, since he had passed more than three-quarters of an hour with me, when he had given me the holy wafer. Neverthe-

less, he believed her, and the order was given to put me in the dungeon under ground, which is a horrible place.”

“It was in that same month,” continues this wretched victim, “that, on being delivered from the dungeon, I gave myself, in my despair, three stabs with a knife—one in my arm to open the arteries, one in the throat to cut my windpipe, and another in my belly, where I held it for four hours buried up to the handle, moving it about from time to time to dispatch myself the more speedily. I lost much blood, and became extremely weak. The wound in my body alone festered, but all I put to it was a little cold water, having nothing else. In vain did I ask for a confessor; they would not grant me one.

“My despair continued for three days after this guilty action; I then attempted another not less so. I took some glass, ground it, and swallowed it by spoonfuls, using nothing else for several days, in order to hasten my death. That caused me to vomit much blood, and often to swoon.

“It was believed that the devil had brought me the knife and given me the glass, because the girls had said so when questioned upon this matter; but they are mistaken, and their devils are not very learned, or speak falsely. I had found the knife in the dungeon, when feeling about, for I could not see; and, to take the rust off, I had

rubbed it for some time. All this took place in the dungeon of the cellar, which is over the vent-hole of the lower dungeon. When I lay there, I often asked of God—*‘For what, O Lord, do you reserve your miserable Magdalen, since she cannot die?’* But very humbly did I return Him thanks, however, for having preserved me, whatever might happen to me; for had I died in that state, I was lost for ever, and there was no hope of salvation for me . . . When human aid had failed me, I found that of God: the less I deserved it, the more I ought to admire His bounty which showers down mercies and favours upon the just and the unjust, and whose charity beams like the rays of the sun upon the good and the wicked. Let my soul ever bless His most holy name, and all that is within me eternally praise His incomparable mercies.”

“I am going to relate one for which I owe him vast obligations, though I did not make a good use of it, any more than of the previous ones. No one could ever imagine all I endured during my imprisonment at Evreux, which lasted five years, three and a half of which I passed in the dungeons, either in the cellar or above. There I fasted my three appointed days on bread and water, without mercy; and I was badly enough fed on the other days. I was taken out three or four times more dead than alive, and, at times of despair, I went

five times seven days without eating or drinking. They ordered me to be visited by divers physicians and surgeons, four times at least, having inflicted on me rather violent torments; and my head, being pricked about and covered with blood, swelled like a bushel. For a very long period, nobody came near me or spoke to me; and M. de Longchamp (the confessor they had given her, and who had declared against her) even kept, by order of M. d'Evreux, the key of my dungeon, fearing lest the turnkeys should give me a little air. The filthy state and the odour of my dungeon were insupportable. All I say is true, and I cannot say all. But what afflicted me still more, was my suffering conscience, which they did not attempt to relieve; for I asked for a confessor a hundred times, but could obtain no other than the penitentiary, whom I could not endure."

What a heart-breaking piteous spectacle to see a poor girl, whose soul was thoroughly inclined to virtue and piety, abandoned by the whole world, and become the victim of the hatred, fanaticism, and cruelty of priests, feeling no pity for sufferings of which they were the authors, and furiously pursuing her by iniquitous means! It is evident that, after having sequestered her from every human being, and subjected her to the treatment of which she has spoken, their intention was to

let her perish, finding it impossible to destroy her by judicial means.

It was amid such sufferings that this girl found some consolation from a virtuous priest who could feel for misfortune, and who succeeded, though not without difficulty, in inspiring her with some confidence, and in receiving the confession which she had long desired to make to a man worthy of her esteem. This good priest gave her all the consolation in his power, and even managed to send her food which they had refused her.

Exposed to sufferings and a trial that seemed endless, Bavent was transported from Evreux to Rouen, and confined in the prisons of the archbishop's palace, without even a morsel of bread being given her for food....“God did not fail to inspire some persons of rank to send me a little sustenance.” In this town she experienced that consolation which had been so often denied her; this is what she states in the following words: “I say so with a full heart; I have praised God a hundred times, in my prison at Rouen, for His mercy towards the miserable Magdalen, in letting her come to this city, and in affording her conscience the persons who direct it. If I had had them in the monastery, I should not be what I now am; and if they had conducted me in like manner, I should have derived a greater benefit

from my torments, and have avoided many offences."

Bavent, being convinced she would be condemned, in consequence of the depositions made against her by the nuns, and other persons, at the instigation of a few fanatical priests, was preparing for death, when she was conducted to the *conciergerie*, and underwent two examinations before the court of Rouen. After having made, with the aid of her confessor, the confession of which we have given an extract, she concludes thus: "Notwithstanding the multitude and enormity of my sins, I would confess them very frankly with the accusation, if they were true: for, indeed, I have no intention of thinking to save my life, but only my soul: I have already several times seen, in anticipation, my death and execution, and I have endeavoured to bring myself to a state in which I wish to be, in order to go to God in the way it will please Him to ordain. My miserable life abounds sufficiently with crimes, without adding those which they have imputed to me. God did not allow me to fall into them; and as I attribute to His grace the remission of sins committed, so ought I also to attribute to Him my preservation from others which I have not committed. If it be His will that those girls be believed, I heartily accept it, in order to sacrifice to Him my reputation and my life."

This is the way in which Magdalen Bavent denies, in her confession, the inculcation of magic laid to her charge at the instigation of the priests who strove thus to justify themselves for the crimes of which they were guilty, and to save the honour of their ministry in confession: to do so, it was necessary to cast upon the poor girl, whom they had seduced and strangely led astray, those irregularities, diabolical practices, and crimes of which they were both the cause and the instruments. Whenever she was summoned to appear, says she, "it was to be present at exorcisms and to hear whatever the girls related against me, in presence of everybody: God only knows what I suffered in heart and mind, when I beheld myself the opprobrium of men and the contempt of the people, passing for the most detestable witch that ever lived. I declare before God, that I do not believe I was ever either a magician or a witch: it is true I have been to the *sabbat*, but I was transported there, and never had any acquaintance or communication with those infernal transactions."

This poor girl was so pestered by all who approached her, whether male or female, that she was made to declare things of which she was evidently not guilty, and which she afterwards retracted. They carried their perfidy and malice towards her so far as to insert, in the *procès-*

verbaux of her examination, avowals she had never made. Thus we find, in an interrogatory mentioned in the work of which we have given the title, and written by a *lieutenant criminel* named Routier, the following declaration: "That Bavent, when living with a sempstress, with whom she boarded for three years, was several times seduced by a magician, who carried her away to the *sabbat* with three of her companions whom he had also debauched. There he had celebrated mass in foul linen belonging to him. Magdalen had said that she had brought away from the *sabbat* the filthy shirt which the magician had used, that she had put it on, and then had felt herself urged towards immorality, till, at the order of a prudent confessor, she had laid aside this abominable garment. That Bavent had said, scarcely a week passed, during the space of eight months, without her being taken by this magician to the *sabbat*, where, on one occasion, he married her to one of the principal devils of hell, named Dagon, who appeared in the shape of a young man and gave her a ring.... That, for her part, she remembered having made nine or ten spells which she composed with sacred wafers, mixed with toads, the hair of a he-goat, which magicians and sorcerers adore in the *sabbat*, and with other filthy and disgusting things. She had also been made to say, "that she was present at a *sabbat* wherein

mothers, with one consent, slaughtered their own children, whom the company cut into pieces; that she had participated in those murders with Picard, and had availed herself of them to make her spells." We have said enough for the information of the reader, and will spare him several other no less revolting accusations, contained in the twenty-four counts of which this indictment is composed.

But what are we to think, when such atrocious, such absurd facts, are, in an official paper, falsely attributed to a poor, friendless, helpless girl, but that they wanted, by perfidious combinations, to cause the unfortunate creature to be considered as the cause of irregularities and crimes due entirely to the wickedness of a few priests, and to that blind boundless obedience prescribed in those prisons, designated monasteries, wherein superiors and directors are able to command anything in the name of God?

Magdalen Bavent, sent from prison to prison, and from one tribunal to another, had to undergo, before the parliament of Rouen, new examinations which are of the same character as the foregoing facts. We shall, therefore, merely observe that they abound throughout in magic, witchcraft, covenants with the devil, intercourse with demons, attendance at the *sabbat*, adoration of a he-goat, profanation of the sacred wafer, with which spells are

composed, men and women slaughtered at the *sabbats*, in which acts Magdalen performs a part; lastly, miracles, in which appear Jesus Christ and the holy Virgin, to avenge the sacrilege committed at the *sabbat*, &c.

The provincial of the Capuchin friars, of whom we have spoken, relates, in the following manner, the exorcisms which the Bishop of Evreux practiced upon the demoniacal nuns. His lordship d'Evreux gradually prepared for making exorcisms, and the demons immediately cried out, with one voice, that Magdalen Bavent was the cause of their being sent into that monastery; that she was a magician; and they alleged several things against her. Therefore she was introduced into the chapel of the sufferers, where three of those devils, namely, Seviathan, Encitif, and Dagon, though attacking her the moment she entered, yet as soon as she had crossed the threshold, gave her a grand reception, called her their darling Magdalen, and, after a thousand devilish caresses, betrayed, accused, and published her as one of the most famous witches of the *sabbat*," &c.

This stupid Capuchin was leagued with certain priests and bishops, who, for the honour of the clergy and the sanctity of confession, wanted to present to the public, as innocent, men who had made such an infamous abuse of their ministry. It was to support this saintly cause, in which he had

taken some share, that this cheat published his work, which is but a tissue of fables, absurdities, and calumny against Bavent. Therein, he devotes one chapter to prove that the nuns of Louviers were possessed of devils. He brings forward first, as a proof, *the continual, horrible, and unrighteous blasphemies uttered by those poor girls*: then, the very astonishing description they give of the *sabbat*, the he-goat, &c. ; the utter aversion they feel at certain moments for confession and communion, and the blasphemy they vent against those sacraments, whereas they adore God fervently a moment afterwards. Lastly, a proof—which it is not surprising to find in the writings of a monk, and which, in his opinion, is undeniable—is, that these facts have been attested by His Lordship, the Bishop of Evreux, assisted in this matter by persons of *considerable* capacity, learning, judgment, and probity, together with His Grace the Archbishop of Toulouse, and eminent doctors, deputed and chosen by the queen, besides a very great number of dignified, conscientious, and prudent persons, who have judged, pronounced, and declared the said possession to be true, real, and corporeal, and this, after full inquiry, perfect acquaintance, mature consideration, and a serious examination of everything.”

Such are the facts and arguments brought forward, in a barbarous style, by this provincial of

the Capuchin friars, in order to prove the demoniacal possession of fifty-two nuns, the tools of their abominable confessors. We cannot be surprised that this man has, for the purpose of supporting the cause of his religion, devoted a chapter in his work "to resolve affirmatively," as he himself says, "that magic deserves to be punished with death, and that the order of divine justice obliges judges to execute witches and sorcerers."

CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORY OF THE LAWSUIT OF LA CADIÈRE
AGAINST FATHER GIRARD, A JESUIT, AND
OTHER TRIALS OF THE SAME NATURE.

“THIS law-suit,” says the author of the *Causes Célèbres*,* in the account he gives of it, “is one of the most celebrated that ever occupied the tribunals of the kingdom: all Europe resounded with the names of *Girard* and *La Cadière*; all Europe read the writings published on both sides; everybody awaited the sentence with impatience; it astonished everybody, and nobody was satisfied.”

This celebrity did not arise from the nature of the affair itself: a director accused of having made use of his ascendancy over the mind of a beautiful young penitent, in order to seduce her, is not unprecedented.

* *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes*, par Richer, t. ii.

This affair, then, is indebted for its celebrity solely to the position of the accused; to the part which was taken in it by the *Company of Jesus*; to the manœuvres they used in order to save the honour of one of their members, and to the imprudence they committed in compromising themselves on this occasion. They followed too strictly their secret policy, which does not allow them to leave any Jesuit in trouble, whatever be the nature of the accusation brought against him. Thereby, every member of the society was excited to undertake anything for the interest or glory of the body, certain of never being outwardly disavowed, nay, assured of being supported by the most extensive and astonishing influence that has ever been known. But, at the same time, the crime of one became the crime of all; and, during the thirty-two years which elapsed between the conclusion of this business and the dissolution of the society, the name of Girard, addressed to a Jesuit, was an insult.

By reading the analysis of the trial, which we are about to give, one may learn what kind of people the Jesuits are, and to what a pitch they can carry immorality, cunning, and hypocrisy. Scouted from the Christian world, rejected by our laws, but supported and encouraged by the court of Rome, by the *Ultramontanes*, and by the enemies of civil and religious liberty, they are spring-

ing up among us at the present day, ever the same, ever enterprising, audacious, greedy of domination, and skilful in making use of confession to rule over the minds of men, to corrupt others, and enrich themselves. Have they not seduced the French clergy into their Macchiavellian system of encroachment? Have not a great many bishops publicly declared that they shared the principles of Jesuitism?—which ought not to surprise us, since they profess those of Ultramontanism.

For our own part, granting to sincere and virtuous priests the esteem and respect which are due to them, we think it is important, for the good of all, to unmask iniquities which, from their nature, can be prevented only by publicity. We shall, therefore, speak out frankly, in order that the reader may form an exact idea of the entire heinousness of the criminal acts to which wicked priests may addict themselves to gratify their passions and make a sacrilegious abuse of the innocence, piety, credulity, inexperience, and boundless confidence, with which women approach the tribunal of confession. A trial, the official details of which are so various and complicated that it could be comprised only in a thick volume, has obliged us, in the analysis which we here present, to swell this chapter to a greater extent than we could have wished.

But, before entering into these details, it is pro-

per to give a short notice of the life and character of Father Girard, and of his victim La Cadière.

Nothing is known about the birth, family, and early youth of father Girard, except that he was a native of Dôle, in Franche-Comté. He was exceedingly ugly, and yet very much in vogue among sanctified women. Being a shrewd hypocrite, he acquired a great reputation as a preacher and director of consciences, as well by his adroit manners as by the easiness of his moral precepts for his fair penitents. Thus it was that he had managed to conciliate their attachment, sway their minds, and subject them passively to whatever he required of them. The address with which he made a profession of piety contributed not a little to gain him the esteem and consideration of the public, even so far as to be looked upon as a saint. In this manner he had risen to be rector of the royal seminary of the navy at Toulon.

Marie-Catherine Cadière was born at Toulon in the year 1709, of a father who left four children. They were entrusted to the care of an extremely devout mother ; one of them continued his father's trade, the second turned friar, and the third embraced the ecclesiastical profession. Young La Cadière was handsome, and her figure well proportioned : she had a fair complexion, a fine neck, black hair, dark eyes, and an animated expressive countenance. She was not wanting in intelli-

gence, though her education had been neglected; so much so that, at the age of one-and-twenty, she could hardly sign her name, and she did not know how to write till a year later: Her character inclined her to seek for praise, and even to pass for a saint. Propelled into these ideas by the interested suggestions of her director, who was also striving to get this reputation, she showed much piety from her youth, and an ardent desire of attaining a high degree of Christian perfection. Such is the testimony given of her by every person who happened to be acquainted with her.

Her ardent mind was beginning to be still further exalted by the perusal of the ascetic books which had been prescribed for her use by her first confessors, when she fell under the direction of Father Girard, who took advantage of those inclinations to lead her into his perfidious designs. For this purpose he directed her into the path of *quietism*,* as an infallible means of success. By his conversation, and the practices he prescribed, he managed to make her believe that she was intimately united to God, and that a soul in that state could not sin, even when the body abandoned itself to irregularities. He even went so far as to effect

* This system is well explained in Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families*. London, Longman, 1845. (See especially ch. v., vi., vii.)—Transl.

his infamous design by persuading her that she was in ecstasy, and that she committed no sin, since her soul, entirely united to God, could do no harm. He had persuaded her moreover that, in her present state of perfection, she was not bound to pray, or to fulfil any other duties prescribed by the Christian religion: Accordingly, she replied to an observation addressed to her upon certain points of this doctrine: "When one is well with God, there is nothing to be feared, and the same when a director commands anything." Girard, in order to remove every scruple from the mind of his penitent, told her she ought to *look upon him as a god*, and, consequently, to submit to whatever he required of her. She said, in one of her declarations, that this Jesuit had so fascinated her mind that she mistook the promptings of nature for ecstasies and the harbingers of celestial pleasures.

Moreover, this girl was not the only one enticed to evil by such abominable suggestions, as the penitents themselves declared; confessing likewise that one of them had become *enciente* by him.

We will not speak of the impudence of this Father Girard, who had succeeded in persuading the public and La Cadière herself that she performed miracles. Accordingly, pious souls would exclaim: "Who would not be converted at witnessing such a spectacle!" The Jesuits also spread abroad these marvels, which, of course, made their

order illustrious. It appears that Girard had another Jesuit, named Grignet, for an accomplice, who acted in concert with him to establish the sanctity of La Cadière. This hypocrite wrote to the poor girl whose reason they were attempting to pervert: "I hope you will always impart to me the revelations which God will give you, for my amendment; he inspires me with a child-like docility to perform whatever you may tell me from Him, and with gratitude for the grace He has given me through you." This young girl, giddy with the renown for sanctity that Father Girard had gained for her, and the worship she received from the most important persons in consequence of that reputation, believed herself truly *miraculated*. Her very companions contributed to the same illusion: they boldly declared there were many saints in paradise who had not wrought so many miracles as herself. This has been deposed to by several witnesses. Her mind was in such a state of frenzy on this point, that she composed a long memorial, in which she gives an account of the miracles she had performed and the visions she had had during Lent, in the year 1730. The reader will excuse us from recording these reveries. In short, La Cadière swore in court that this Jesuit, after sacrificing her to his licentiousness, wanted to sacrifice her to his ambition, to secure a reputation for making saints.

Father Girard directed La Cadière's conscience for two years and a half. The first year was employed in studying her character and mental disposition, in gaining information from certain devotees with whom she was intimate, and whose confessor he was, and in preparing her by his conversations. He allowed her to indulge in amusements and pleasures from which she had till then abstained. He made her take the communion every day, but in different churches, in order that the public might not be shocked at such excessive devotion, which formed a strange contrast with her dissipation; and he made her read books calculated to excite her imagination and fill her with ecstacy, visions, and revelations. Every day he grew more intimate and familiar with her; and would say that God required something more than what she had hitherto done. She put such blind confidence in him, that one day, on his telling her he had had a vision in which he was inspired to make a covenant with the demon to drag a soul out of purgatory, she made that covenant, in spite of her repugnance, being—so to speak—forced to it by her confessor. When confronted with Father Girard concerning this fact, she declared that she yielded and abandoned herself up to everything he required her to do, to say, or to suffer, and that, from that moment, she experienced very extraordinary sensations, convulsive symptoms, and dis-

gusting visions, of which she complained to him.

It was owing to the confidence with which Father Girard had inspired La Cadière, and to the opinion she entertained of his sanctity, that this unfortunate girl, who sought in the tribunal of confession counsels only whereby she might attain perfection, found those horrible maxims which led her into the greatest irregularities. This is what she was herself aware of, when too late, as she says in her justification: "I found, unfortunately, that when libertinism is invested with the outward forms of piety, and we are urged towards impurity by the principles of religion, that fund of corruption, which we inherit from Adam, but too soon re-kindles in the mind, and abandons us even to the most shameful passions, without even scruple or remorse. An outward show of piety caused me to consider as lawful, or indifferent, things which, occurring under any other shape, would not have failed to shock me."

A proof of the excessive influence which this cunning cheat had acquired over the mind of his penitent, is her own expression to the confessor whom she had received in place of Father Girard. This honest monk, who had begun to lead her back to virtue, and in whom she put confidence, having visited her at a moment when she was in great agitation, through the violence of her ecstasies and convulsions, she said to him, with reproaches, "I

will return to that Father (Girard), I will have him in spite of God, in spite of the bishop, in spite of my relations, in spite of you !”

We shall not record the other abominable acts of Father Girard towards this too simple and credulous girl, whom he had sacrificed to his vile and sacrilegious passion. The proofs are to be found in several official documents. The first are taken from the *procès-verbal* of the interrogatory put to La Cadière by order of the Archbishop of Toulon, who sent his official for that purpose.

She afterwards relates that Father Girard used to embrace his other penitents, and lock himself up in their chambers.

“ He would order her to go, during Lent, to the church in the evening, when nobody was there, and would embrace and kiss her before he entered the confessional.”

When she was in the convent he would come and see her, in the parlour, open the little door of the grate with his knife, and kiss her ; after which he would behave with the greatest indecency. . . . When she asked him whether all that was a conduct conformable to the spirit of God, he assured her it was. She afterwards concludes her narrative by saying she could “ mention many other things about the reverend father which would never be ended, and which are still more serious.”

After these declarations made to ecclesiastical authority, La Cadière, believing she had no longer

any reason to spare her director, laid her complaint before the Lieutenant of Toulon.

By means of measures taken to justify Father Girard and devolve all the guilt upon La Cadière, the Jesuits managed, doubtless by threats and address, to make her retract what she had said in her previous interrogatory. The Bishop of Toulon had indeed forbidden all the confessors to hear La Cadière before she had given a formal retraction of her accusations against Father Girard. Having enjoyed a little liberty after this retraction, she availed herself of it to declare before the commissioners that they had made her drink salted wine whilst fasting, which had troubled her mind; that she remained stedfast to her first declarations, and revoked all she might have said to the contrary.

The trial had become extremely complicated and of long duration, either from the cunning manœuvres of Father Girard—from the interest which the Jesuits felt that their comrade should be exculpated—from the effects which the same motives produced upon the clergy—or, lastly, by means of the calumnious reports spread against La Cadière by the devotees and penitents devoted to the confessor. Unfortunately, the judges happened to be equally prejudiced or corrupt, so that Father Girard passed for innocent, in spite of the evidence of his guilt.

La Cadière's mother, seeing her daughter over-

whelmed by such powerful enemies, and destitute of every means of justification, addressed successively four petitions—namely, to the Cardinal de Fleury, to the Chancellor, to the Keeper of the Seals, and the Secretary of State. We will here mention these complaints, which were but too well proved:—"Father Girard," says she, "Rector of the Jesuits of Toulouse, under pretence of leading this poor child to sublime perfection, has committed the most horrible crimes upon her.....As soon as my daughter wished to clear up, with another confessor, the doubts she had ever entertained about her state and that of sanctity attributed to her, they immediately set her down as a loose woman. They have kept her a prisoner, without her knowing by what authority, in a cellar of the Convent of Ursulines, in this town, to extort from her a disavowal of her accusation. They suborn witnesses against her, and silence her own. If my daughter has calumniated Father Girard, I myself will give her up to execution, which she would deserve; but if this friar, her confessor, has seduced her in a horrible manner, he ought not to escape with impunity."

This disconsolate mother complained on the following points:—1st, that the bishop and the Jesuits corrupted the witnesses, preventing some from appearing, and prescribing to others what they were to depose; 2ndly, the dishonesty of the

recorder of the officiality, who drew up in his own fashion the depositions of the witnesses; 3rdly, the destitution of her daughter, devoid of all counsel, even the *procureur*, allowed her by the *lieutenant du bailliage*, refusing his ministry; 4thly, the ill-treatment which her daughter experienced from the nuns among whom she was detained, and who insulted her in every way," &c.

All these petitions were ineffectual and remained unanswered. La Cadière's mother then resolved to address a new petition to Cardinal de Fleury containing the following facts: "The seducer enjoys not only impunity, but even the outward appearance of innocence, which they strive to maintain for him, whereas my daughter is treated openly as if she were guilty and already condemned. Father Girard continues to perform all his sacerdotal functions: he has among the auditors of his sermons his lordship the bishop, and the official, his judge; he is ever active, even in the ministry which he had used for the seduction of several persons, and of which he now avails himself to bribe our best witnesses. My daughter, on the contrary, has much trouble in getting permission to confess her sins; she is confined in a monastery, the superior of which is the sister of a Jesuit, which is subject to the direction of Father Girard himself and his fraternity, and which, of all the monasteries in the town, is

the one most devoted to them. There, she is deprived of her liberty, being allowed to leave her chamber only to hear mass. She is reduced to a horrible solitude, having permission to see nobody from without but me alone, not even her brothers, nor to have any intercourse in the interior of the convent with any of the nuns. I say nothing of the bad impression which this proof of the influence of that party and the menaces which its partisans add to it, make upon the witnesses; for all the manœuvres, all the oppression employed either by them or by the bishop, their protector, will never be able to weaken the procedure, composed till now of fifty witnesses, so far as to do away with the complete proof of the seduction, and the crimes of the seducer.....Be moved, my lord, by the tears of a mother who, in claiming your protection, cannot believe she is importunate, since she demands only what is granted her by the ordinary laws."

This petition, like the former ones, remained unanswered. Every precaution was taken to turn the inquiry in favour of Father Girard and his fraternity. For this purpose, the *procès-verbaux* of the depositions were taken every evening to the Jesuits, in order to confer with the accused party and Father Sabatier about the witnesses they ought to produce on the morrow, to depose facts contradictory to those which had been

brought forward by the witnesses of La Cadière. When they had agreed about the persons to be heard, who were always either actual penitents of Fathers Girard and Sabatier, or people belonging to the Jesuits, the *promoteur* caused them to be summoned at his request.

They refused to admit several other proofs of subornation: among other things, it had been offered to be proved "that the Bishop of Toulon had written and sent by his secretary, letters to the nuns of St. Claire d'Ollioules, to recommend those who had been unfavourable to Father Girard to turn their re-examination in his favour; that he had threatened the *tourière* and other servants of the convent, who had accused the good father, to turn them away, and even to put them to the torture."

Father Girard, seeing that his conduct towards La Cadière gained greater publicity every day, and foreseeing that it might become fatal to him, hastened to get back the letters he had written to his penitent. The latter restored them to him, not being aware that he took them back only to efface the proofs of the crimes of which he had been guilty towards her. We may even see the precaution he took in order that the letters he wrote to her might not fall into the hands of a third party. Indeed, in one of his letters addressed to the abbess of the convent of Toulon, where La

Cadière then was, he made this request: "Let the young lady write to me without her letters being read, and my answers return to her without being seen." He even carried his precaution still farther; for he gave two letters to his messengers, one of which contained only spiritual counsel, to pass through the hands of the abbess in case she required it, and the other in which were the true sentiments of the director, to be delivered directly into the hands of his penitent. When La Cadière asked him before the tribunal to produce the letters she had written to him, he refused, under pretence that they *were composed of secrets of conscience*. But after insisting several times, telling him that she permitted them to be made public, he replied that he had not those letters at hand; and being questioned still more closely, he said he had burned them. But this wretch carried his knavery still further: he added to the proceedings a certain number of letters, both of those he had written to La Cadière during her residence in the convent of Ollioules, which he had had plenty of time to alter, as of those he had received, and in which he had been audacious enough to blot out several words and dates, and to remove the second leaves.

It was difficult for Father Girard, oppressed by so much weighty proof and testimony, not to fall into a few contradictions, notwithstanding his cunning and presence of mind. This is stated in

the notes of the judges of the parliament of Provence, addressed to the Chancellor:—"We saw him agitated by conflicting emotions: at one time dejected even to weeping, when he had nothing to answer; at another, affecting an assurance ill-becoming his situation. Into what contradictions did he not fall! We remarked that he contradicted himself as often as five times upon the same fact."

This prosecution, of which it would be too long to relate the particulars, was disgraced by revolting partiality and irregularity, both in the name of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction and in that of the civil procedure, through the intrigues and perfidy of the Jesuits and their numerous partisans; for it had been resolved to bring this tissue of iniquities to an end by the death of La Cadière, and thus justify the innocence and sanctity of Father Girard. Accordingly, the definitive conclusion of the *parquet*, given on the 11th of September, 1731, was to the effect that "Father Girard be discharged upon every count in the indictment; that La Cadière be declared attainted of false and calumnious accusations, of having made an abuse of religion and profaned its mysteries, and of having falsely counterfeited the saint and afterwards the *possessed*. For atonement of which she shall be given up to the hands of the executioner, in order to make *amende honorable* before the door of the

metropolitan church, and thence led to the *Place des Prêcheurs*, to be hanged and strangled, and previously to be put to the ordinary and extraordinary torture, in order to extort from her more ample truth about the accomplices of her crimes."

As it was supposed that her fate was definitively decided, the Capuchins, friends of the Jesuits, presented themselves before her in order to confess her. She told them that Father Girard had greater need of their assistance, and *that it would not be among the Capuchins that she should choose*. Accordingly she demanded another confessor.

The court at length pronounced its final sentence upon the fate of the accused parties. In the cause of Father Girard one half of the voices was for his being condemned to the stake, and the other half for his being discharged. In this manner he was dismissed, and got off with impunity: as a magistrate then said, "*He left the stage half pure and half burnt.*"

As to the girl La Cadière, the conclusions of the *parquet*, which were for her being hanged, were rejected, and she was sent back to her mother to be taken care of.

On leaving the prison, she was welcomed with demonstrations of the most earnest and universal joy. She retired to the house of her attorney, where she received visits from all the most dis-

tinguished persons in the town, and, from time to time, she was obliged to show herself at the window to the people, who called for her with loud cries. On the morrow, she went to thank the judges: everybody wished to have her at his table; and arrangements had been made that she might go successively into all the principal houses of Aix. But the hatred and influence of the Jesuitical party pursued her with the same fury. The commandant and the lieutenant of the province gave her orders to leave the town the same day. She then judged what she had to fear from the boundless influence and malignity of her enemies. She felt sure that they would not dare to kidnap her in a town where she was under the protection of all the inhabitants; but that, as soon as she was far away from them, they would deprive her of her liberty, to hand her over, perhaps, to the most cruel persecutions. To prevent this danger—so it is said—she suddenly disappeared, without any person having ever been able to find out what had become of her.

What are we to think of the sudden disappearance of a girl who had attracted so lively an interest and so much enthusiasm, not only from all the inhabitants of a city, but, we may say, of all France? They dreaded the effect she might have still produced had she continued to live in the world. Must we not think, from the furious

eagerness with which they strove to bring her to the scaffold, that they made away with her in some way or other, in order that so serious a subject of hatred against the Jesuits might cease to exist? We would not accuse the man of rashness who might think that people who have committed so many crimes, and have not hesitated to plunge their daggers in our kings, may likewise have sacrificed this new victim.

As to Father Girard, he received from the public a reception very different from the one given to La Cadière. Though, in execution of the sentence, he ought naturally to have been conducted to the prisons of the officiality, he was sent back to the house of the Jesuits, in a sedan-chair, amid the execration and insults of the people, who called him a sorcerer and a sacrilegious wretch. He proved that he completely deserved the latter denomination, for he had scarcely arrived at his convent when he set about performing mass. But the Archbishop of Aix, fearing lest his presence in the town might occasion some riot, caused him to depart secretly on the morrow. He repaired to Lyons, where, still protected by the clergy, he received a letter from the Bishop of Viviers, of which it is proper to make known a few passages. Thus speaks this prelate: "You have not forgotten, reverend father, my former sentiments of esteem, respect, and reverence for you....I

doubt not, my reverend father, that you have answered the views of God, ever salutary, though severe in appearance....What consolation would it be to me to be able to embrace you here, and to give you proofs of my esteem and confidence! Could you not come and pass a few days with me, and devote your talents and labours to the necessities of my diocese?.. Nothing would be more agreeable to me than to find thereby an opportunity of showing publicly that my sentiments towards you are above the popular fanaticism," &c.

The letter proves that the fanaticism of the bishop exceeded that of which, under the name of popular, even the higher classes are accused. Here we may well say: *Vox populi, vox Dei*; whereas the conduct of several members of the clergy was a diabolical transaction, for the very and sole purpose of maintaining the honour of the priesthood and that of confession.

In short, Father Girard died at Dôle, in 1733, in the ordour of sanctity, according to two letters extensively published abroad by the Company of Jesus, as we may judge from the following passages: "His body, rather ugly in his life-time, was so handsome after his death, that we were quite surprised.....People shouted on seeing his body.....It was necessary to hide it from the people, who rushed forward in crowds to touch it with their prayer-books, chaplets, &c.

Since his burial, many persons have come to begin *novenas*.....God seems disposed to glorify his servant.....He distinguished himself especially by his preaching, his direction of consciences, and his generally acknowledged piety.....He renewed his vows before receiving the holy viaticum, and he declared that, by the grace of God, he had fallen into none of the dreadful vices of which he had been accused on the trial.....He prayed for his enemies, and shortly after quietly expired: *Thus dies the righteous in his righteousness.*"

What are we to think of these Jesuitical impostures, when the guilt of their *confrère* is proved by such numerous unobjectionable testimonies, and when the judges of the parliament of Provence wrote as follows to the Chancellor? "Convinced by the impression resulting from the whole of this criminal case, we believed that death alone could expiate so many crimes, and fire purify so many horrors, and that we were answerable for a signal example, both to religion and to the safety of families."

But such is the influence of this corporation, to which the revival of civil and religious despotism gave a new existence in the commencement of this century, that biographers seem to wish to exculpate a man branded with the most horrible crimes: such is the direction which they are striving to give to present generations. Whither then

would they lead us? Do they hope to make Papal and Jesuitical Catholicism prevail against reason and the evangelical doctrine? Will they unken-
nel, for this purpose, legions of long or short-robed Jesuits? Will they divide France into two camps, ready to come to blows, and shed the blood of our citizens to secure the triumph of this holy cause? We have no room for doubt, when in these days—in the nineteenth century—we see the tendency of the politico-religious system that prevails in Roman Catholic countries, and even among Protestants, when we are witnesses of conflicts, disturbances, and even of civil war kindled in Switzerland.

One of the most remarkable features of this prosecution is the Jesuitical and sacerdotal coalition to save a wretch from the vengeance of the laws, and make the punishment due to his crimes fall upon an unfortunate but innocent girl.

Indeed, what is more monstrous than to see, on the one hand, the most enormous infamy counselled or authorised, and identified with religion, and the ministers of the most holy of religions the accomplices and protectors of the most unbridled licentiousness, and the oppressors of innocence and misfortune, and, on the other hand, tribunals lending themselves to combinations so contrary to all justice? For, indeed, we see, in this prosecution, the Jesuits take the alarm and set in motion all

their intrigues, perfidy, and influence, to clear one of their body, and devolve shame and punishment upon La Cadière and her family. First, in concert with Girard, they suborn the numerous devotees whom he held captive under his direction, and several of whom had been enticed by him into the same debauchery. They acted in the same way upon the minds of the nuns, whose director he was, at the very moment La Cadière was about to be interrogated and confronted with the witnesses. This is not all: she was threatened with the torture and other pains, if she insisted on maintaining her complaint; and they added that if, on the contrary, she persisted in her retraction, she might be sure that she should leave the convent as soon as possible, without either herself or her relations being punished. She declares that these outrages, threats, and promises, were made, as well by the superior nuns of the convent as by other persons. She adds that the recorder of the officiality made no scruple, when a part of the witnesses wished to depose, to refuse them; he would not take down their testimony. She reveals several other acts of violence and subornation.

La Cadière had had time to become acquainted with the plottings of the Jesuits against her. Noticing that Father Girard rambled when confronted with her, she said to him: "In fact, I

know I have an affair with a cunning Jesuit, a great preacher, backed by a powerful and formidable society; but I do not fear you; I have truth on my side; and it will not be difficult to confound you." This girl showed admirable courage amid the calumny which assailed her on all sides. Father Girard impudently presuming to call her a cheat (*friponne*), this insult excited her indignation, and, half rising from her stool, she replied to him angrily; but, fearing lest she had been wanting in respect to her judges, she begged them to pardon her this impulse of indignation, excited, she said, by so much impudence.

This scene caused universal surprise among the magistrates. So much modesty, good sense, and firmness, united in a girl whose birth and education promised nothing of the sort, seemed a prodigy.

The Jesuits and their trusty friends among the secular clergy made, as we have said, a pompous apology for Father Girard, in order to relieve their honour and throw blame upon La Cadière, by condemning the issue of the prosecution. Thus, the Bishop of Marseilles wrote to the minister Fleury, even under the pretext of the interests of religion and those of the state, as he himself expresses it: "You know, sir," says he, "in what manner the parliament of Aix has finished the grand affair which has so long occupied the atten-

tion of all Europe, and you have perceived better than any one the *indignity* and *ridiculousness* of a sentence which has discharged both the accusers and the accused. If the judges had caused Father Girard, *whom I consider as a true saint*, to be burnt, they would have committed an injustice; but they would not have dishonoured themselves before men as they have done," &c.

We might speak of a second law-suit, brought against another monk, of the order of Observantins, who figured as an actor in favour of Father Girard, in the trial of that Jesuit, under the protection of episcopal authority; but his order, far from being the accomplice of his crimes, prosecuted him for robbery and seduction, in spite of the intrigues of the Jesuits. But we have said enough in this chapter upon such an odious subject.

We will conclude by quoting a few condemnations, in causes of seduction in confession, by our parliaments, before Father Girard's affair, which ended in 1731.

We find in the registers of the parliament of Paris that the curate of Saint Sauveur, at Péronne, having been convicted of having had an intrigue with a nun, his penitent, was condemned, on the 12th of June, 1707, to nine years' banishment. On the 31st of January, 1660, the parliament of Grenoble condemned a priest to be hanged and afterwards to be burnt, for having made an abuse

of the sacrament of penance, and for having laid his hands upon the necks and other parts of the bodies of a multitude of his penitents, whilst hearing their confession. The parliament of Paris, by a decree of the 22d of June, 1673, condemned a director of nuns, for seduction, to make *amende honorable* before Notre-Dame, to be hanged at the Place Maubert, and to be burnt, together with his process. The same parliament pronounced on the 6th of March, 1714, a decree of penalty of death against a curate of the diocese of Bourges, for having seduced, in the tribunal of confession, several of his parishioners, and for attempting to violate their chastity. In 1693, by a sovereign judgment given at the Provincial Council of Artois, on the 21st of December, Nicholas Beguiet, the Curate of Saint Paul, convicted of incest with one of his parishioners and penitents, was condemned to make *amende honorable*, holding a taper, and to perpetual banishment for that crime, and for having committed forgeries in the registers of baptism.

BOOK III.

CONFESSION CONSIDERED IN ITS RELATION TO POLITICS.

CHAPTER I.

PECUNIARY COMPENSATIONS AND TAXES IM- POSED BY THE POPES AND THE CLERGY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

WE have seen in the preceding chapters what were the penalties and privations inflicted upon penitents among the primitive Christians. But discipline being relaxed with the prosperity and the triumph of the Church, not only the time of penance was abridged, but it was alleviated by easy fastings, slight abstinence, short prayers, pilgrimages, and by what was designated under the term of pious works, such as the foundation of monasteries, the building of churches, donations to

these same churches, the erection of hospitals, and by prayers and masses. Gradually also the remission of sins was made to be an object of barter, and was to be procured for ready money. Ecclesiastical history, and especially the old chronicles and the lives of the saints, demonstrate the constant eagerness ever displayed by the clergy, especially by the court of Rome and the monks, to acquire temporal possessions; a system which, in our own time, has reappeared with new activity. This simoniacal usage of administering the sacraments for money dates from remote antiquity, and has not ceased to exist, though it has found in all ages ecclesiastics who, being full of the sacred functions of their ministry, have opposed it with noble disinterestedness. They said with Saint Paul, "And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."*

This kind of simony was forbidden by certain councils, as we shall presently show, but the *auri sacra fames* braves every law, even in religion. Have not monks been seen undertaking for money to do the canonical penance imposed upon sinners by the bishops? We may see an example of this in the concession quoted by Muratori, which Count Ildebrand made of an estate that was in litigation with the monks, on condition that they would

* S. Paul, ad Tim., 1, c. vi., v. 8.

undertake the penance imposed upon him by his bishop. "The monks," says Ildebrand, "earnestly entreated by me, took upon themselves the severe penance of three years, to which Bishop Aretin had subjected me."*

It was by means of their absolutions *in articulo mortis* that the secular and regular clergy invaded a notable portion of the estates of Christendom. By these means a man thought he saved his soul, that of his wife, and those of all his relations.† This is what was called *redemptionis via*, the road to heaven; nay, they went still farther to attain this aim—miracles were supposed which opened the gates of heaven to the sinner. "For to this," says Fleury, "tended most of the histories related in the collections of miracles of Saint Martin, Saint Benedict, and other very famous saints.‡ The same author quotes, in support of these facts, the life of Saint Meinvere de Paderbonne, who lived in the reign of Saint Henri. "This life," says he,

* Et insuper a me humiliter exorati, onus trium annorum de pœnitentia mea super se susceperunt, quam de peccatis meis ab Aretino episcopo acciperam.—(Murat., *Antiq. med. ævi*, t. v., an. 1154, p. 757.)

† Pro remedio animæ meæ, et animæ superadictæ uxoris meæ, et parentum nostrorum, denique remissione omnium peccatorum nostrorum.

‡ Fleury, *Disc. sur l' Hist. Ecclés*, 3^{me} disc., No. 2.

“is principally taken up with the enumeration of the lands he acquired for his Church.”*

Whilst penance was maintained in all its rigour in a few convents of Cenobites, it became easy and expeditious for worldly people, and especially for the rich, whatever might be the crimes of which they were guilty. Money, donations at the point of death, became a penance not less efficacious for the redemption of sins than macerations continued throughout the natural term of life. Not satisfied with taking some contribution for admitting the sinner to the sacrament of penance,† his fastings were dispensed with by means of a sum in proportion to his fortune.‡ These means proving insufficient to satisfy avarice, an expedient was found, with great sinners or scrupulous souls, to effect the appropriation of considerable wealth. For this purpose crimes were taxed, and possessions were demanded, in proportion to the gravity and number of the sins committed. “You are not ignorant,” writes Pierre Damien, “that we measure the degree of penance in proportion to the

* Fleury, disc. ix., No. 11.

† Ministerium ad baptismum vel pœnitentiam ex argento, pensant libras quinque.—(Anastasius, in vita Sixt. iii., apud Mart., t. iii., p. 118.)

‡ Si quis vero non poterit jejunare, et habet unde dare ad redimendum, si fuerit dives, pro septem hebdomadibus det solidos 20; si autem multum pauper fuerit, det solidos 3.

value of the gifts.”* This is what was called *money-penance*—*pœnitentiæ deargentatæ*. “Money-penance,” says he, in his life of Saint Hugo, Bishop of Grenoble, “is not imposed upon those who have been convicted of their crimes, or who have avowed them.”† Bishops had also arrogated to themselves the right of imposing upon penitents not only money, but also corporeal punishments, which might be ransomed for money. This simoniacal act, by which they authorised themselves, under pretext of penance, to lay an impost upon individuals, was, moreover, a usurpation of the rights of the sovereign.‡

We believe it was to levy this impost that the clergy so earnestly solicited sinners to approach the tribunal of penance.§ Men were

* Non ignoras quia cum a pœnitentibus terras accipimus, juxta mensuram muneris, eis de quantitate pœnitentiæ relaxamus.—(Pct. Dam., in Epist. apud Baron., anno 1055.)

† Non deargentatam convictis, vel confitentibus imposuit pœnitentiam.—(In vita S. Hugon., Epis. Gratiopolit., No. 20.)

‡ Si prælatus imponat pœnam pecuniariam alicui pro peccato, et repetat illam, regia prohibitio non habet locum. Verumtamen si prælatis imponant pœnitentias corporales, et illi, sic puniti, velint hujusce modi pœnitentias per pecunias sponte redimere, locum non habet regia prohibitio, si coram prælatis pecunia ab eis exigatur.—(Concil. Triburiense, ann. 895, c. 57, 58.)

§ Statuimus ut omnes archidiaconi et presbyteri, sicut sacri canones præcipiunt, vocent ad pœnitentiam adulteros,

absolved who had lost all knowledge, and when it could not be ascertained whether they wished to do penance; for it was necessary that the priest should be always present at their death and exercise his ministry, in order not to lose his rights. But, in this case, should they recover their health, they were forced to do the penance imposed upon them. Father Mabillon quotes a remarkable instance of this kind. Wamba, king of the Visigoths, having been poisoned, and being supposed to be at the point of death, senseless and inanimate, Quiricius, bishop of Toledo, imposed a penance upon him. The king having recovered his health, shut himself up in a monastery, where he remained till his death, in order to accomplish the penance which had been prescribed for him.*

The Church soon forgot the precept of Jesus Christ—"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."† The custom of offerings had been established, not to procure worldly comforts for the bishops and priests, but to be divided into

incestos, sanguine mistos, fures, homicidas, maleficos, et qui cum animalibus se inquinant; et si pœnitere noluerint, separentur ab ecclesia et a communione.—(Concil. Cyacensi, anno. 1050, can. 4.)

* Mabill., t. i., anat. Benedict., p. 11.

† Matth., cap. x., v. 8.

equal portions among the poor, and the widows, orphans, and the priests who were not in a state to procure themselves the necessaries of life by their labour. “If we have,” says Tertullian, “a kind of treasury among us, it is money amassed without dishonouring religion: every month a sum is put by voluntarily, for it is necessary for every one to be willing and able, each doing so of his own accord, and without being compelled. This fund is, like a pious deposit, to be opened; not to make feasts and banquets, but to feed and maintain the poor.”*

It is plain that the means of acquiring wealth have been, at all times, employed by the clergy, even in the administration of the sacrament: this is proved as well by the facts of ecclesiastical history as by the reiterated canons of the councils, which protest against this anti-christian simony, and, moreover, by the decrees of the popes—a sacrilegious custom practised even as early as the end of the third century, as is proved by the 48th canon of the Council of Elvira:—“We have thought proper to put an end to the custom prevalent among those who present themselves for baptism, of giving money; in order that the priest may not appear to change the nature of what he received

* Tertull., apolog., § 39.

gratuitously.”* The Council of Voison, held in 442, excommunicates those who receive money from the sick. This kind of simony was uninterruptedly propagated in the succeeding centuries, and prevailed in the court of Rome more openly than in any other church. This is what Æneas Sylvius—he who later became pope under the name of Pius II.—complained of about the middle of the twelfth century. “The court of Rome,” says he, “gives nothing but for ready money; it goes so far as to sell the imposition of hands and the gifts of the Holy Ghost: even the absolution of sins is obtained only with money.”†

The administration of the sacraments, and particularly of confession, was likewise a subject of speculation in France. A violent altercation arose on this very subject between the officiating priest of the parish of Saint Eustache, at Paris, and the one of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois. This vestry quarrel was brought to an end in 1250 by an agreement to the effect, that to the latter church should belong all the offerings made to that of Saint-Eustache, and that both churches should share the emoluments proceeding from the produce

* *Emendari placuit, ut hi qui baptizantur (ut fieri solebat) nummos in concham non mittant, ne sacerdos quod gratis accepit, pretio detrahare videatur.*—(Concil. Elibert, can. 48.)

† Æneas Sylvius, *Epist.* 66, ad Joan. Peragell.

of confession, baptism, visits to the sick, extreme unction, legacies of moveables and fixtures, benediction of nuptial couches, money given at the church-doors on occasions of marriages, &c., &c. We here see that nothing that can bring in money had been forgotten, if we except the privileged enclosures, as at the present day in the churches of La Madeleine and Loretto, where none enter but those who pay from ten to fifty centimes, according to the magnificence of the ceremonies, the celebrity of the preachers, or that of the ladies who collect the money (*dames quêteuses*.)

The pretensions of the clergy, and their thirst for lucre, increased to such a pitch as to induce them, even in the fifteenth century, to bring actions against those who refused the payment demanded. Confession was paid as people pay for a mass at the present day; nay, the priest purchased of the revenue of the parish standing-room for a confessional, just as a person who lets out chairs purchases the right of placing them in a church. In 1776, there was a law-suit between the confessors and the curate of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie. The curate accused them of not putting strictly into the box the perquisites they received in their confessionals. During all the time this trial lasted, no confessors were to be found for the sick, because there was no profit in confessing them.* At

* Essai d'une histoire de la paroisse de Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie.

length, the parliament of Paris condemned the exaction of these perquisites as simoniacal and sacrilegious.

But a still more odious means, and one more contrary to religion, morality, and sound policy, is that of inveigling by the medium of confession, and by surreptitious wills, private fortunes, to the detriment of the heirs. It is by this means, so potent with weak or superstitious minds, and lately put in practice with a remarkable activity, that have arisen, as if by magic, those numerous convents of men and women, which now cover every part of France.

The Church, which, in the middle ages, had seized with address and under pretence of religion every opportunity of mingling in temporal affairs, had managed, in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, by alleging its canonical right, to take a share in wills and to deny their validity, unless the curate, assisted by two witnesses, had sanctioned them by his presence. We see by the 16th canon of the council of Toulouse, in 1229, that the bishops of which it was composed declared void the last wills of testators, who had not been authorised by the curate or the official. That of Albi, in the year 1254, threatens with excommunication such heirs as may refuse to hand over to the curates the testaments of the deceased. They enjoin the pastors to read them publicly in their

parishes and to cause them to be executed. They carried things even to the extreme of refusing burial to those whose wills had not been deposited in the hands of the bishop, official, or curate, even though they had confessed their sins. Every man who died without having given a part of his wealth to the Church was deprived of prayers, which, in clerical terms were called *découfé*. John Galli, or Le Cog, observes that heirs, to save the honour of an intestate person, used to ask as a favour to administer for him *ad causas pias*.*

The venality of the sacraments and things relating to worship had been carried to such an excess in Catholicism, at the period of the sitting of the Council of Trent, that they were obliged to take into consideration the scandalous abuses against which the Protestants had exclaimed. It was first proposed to add, to the decree which forbade *to exact anything or ask for anything*, the words *to receive nothing* ; and, in the second place, they added besides—*under pretext of any customs whatsoever*. “They who wished,” says Fra Paolo, “that there should be added a prohibition against receiving anything under pretext of custom, grounded their reasons on the precept prescribed to the apostles to give gratuitously *what they had gratuitously received*, and on several canons of the

* Galli, quæst. 212.

councils, which pronounce against those who gave or who received temporal things for a spiritual one. They said that the custom, which is contrary to divine and natural law, is a corruption which ought not to take place; that, under the title of *Simonia*, they condemn the custom of giving or receiving for the possession of benefices, the benediction of marriage, the benediction of chrism or of oil, and for burials; and that the application of this prohibition was much more just with respect to the administration of the sacraments: that not to forbid the custom of receiving, would be doing nothing, since the corruption had become general, and every one made the universality his excuse; that as the decree had condemned the custom of receiving before the administration of the sacraments, they ought, for the same reason, to prohibit generally the receiving anything afterwards; because, by not expressly condemning the former, they would seem to approve of the latter—lastly, in order to get the sacraments administered in all purity, it was necessary to suppress absolutely the voluntary offerings at the time of receiving the sacraments, and to exhort the faithful to make them at other times and on other occasions.”

All these reasons and motives which ought to have prevailed among men imbued with evangelical precepts, and with the honour and dignity of religion, were rejected by the influence of the

clergy, who have constantly striven to augment their riches. Arguments were found to oppose to the precepts and the example of the apostles, who gave gratuitously what they had gratuitously received. They went even so far as to say "*that they ought not to avow that there had been a custom established in the Church to give or receive anything for the administration of the sacraments, because the usage of offerings being found everywhere, it would be avowing that the Church had tolerated or even approved a very pernicious abuse.*"* Thus they dissembled a truth known to all, in order to authorize a lucrative simony.

Moreover, not only was this kind of simony received into the general practice of the Church, but it was approved and exercised on a great scale by the popes. It was in the general Council of Latran that Innocent III., the founder of sacerdotal confession, caused the custom of receiving money for the administration of the sacraments to be approved, and to be prescribed to the bishops, in the name of the council, to oblige the people, either by gentle means or by ecclesiastical penalties, to observe this *laudable custom* which people had desired to have condemned as sacrilegious.

Muratori mentions an ancient penitential ritual,†

* Histoire du Concile de Trente, par Fra Paolo Sarpi, l. ii.

† Muratori, t. v., *Antiqui medii ævi*, p. 724.

which proves that the custom of receiving money to exempt from canonical penance, and grant a pardon for sins was very common in the eighth century. He owns that it is by these means that the secular clergy as well as the monks have acquired great possessions. "Everybody sees plainly," says he, "that it was from the redemption of sins that arose that considerable quantity (*non levem copiam*) of territorial possessions and other riches, by means of which both the monastic and secular churches have been so speedily enriched (*celeriter ditatæ fuerint*)." He remarks that it was at the period when it became lawful for monks to confess, that they came gradually to take a share in this abundant harvest (*in hanc sensim messim convolaberunt*), and strong in the privileges that had been given them, they know how to turn them to advantage.

We find in the same ritual the degree of guilt attached to the different sins, and the quantity and duration to be observed in those penances. This ritual indicates at the same time how and with what sum any one may be enfranchised from very painful practices to which it would be necessary to submit, if he did not avail himself of a means which has, on the one hand, the advantage of being generally easy, and which, on the other, enriches and enhances the prosperity of the clergy. Accordingly, they say therein to the confessor,

“Whenever we give a counsel to the penitent, let us begin with imposing a penance—how long and in what manner he must fast; and if he cannot fast, he may redeem his sins, *si jejulare non potest, redimere peccata sua possit*. It is added that every penitent must observe the fast prescribed by his confessor, or in lieu of it the compensations, which consist in giving, if the person be rich, twenty-six sous for a year of penance; but if poor, it is sufficient to give three sous.* It had also been prescribed—no doubt according to the amount of a mass—that it was necessary to cause thirty masses to be said to buy off one year’s penance.†

The kind of sins mentioned in this ritual is an evident proof of the great depravity, barbarity, and gross superstition which reigned in the eighth and following centuries, both among the clergy and the laity. We find therein, for instance, that they took the communion, though in a state of drunkenness, and that if they happened to vomit the sacred wafer, they were liable to forty days’ penance.‡

* Muratori, t. v., *Antiqui medii ævi*, p. 724.

† *Trigenta missæ duodecim menses possunt redimere.*—(Id., *ibid.*, p. 726.)

‡ *Accepisti communionem sanctam? conservasti eam? Si vomitum fecisti ex ea propter ebrietatem, XL dies pœniteas.*—(Id., *ibid.*, p. 733.)

We see in these boons the great error in which people lay as to the degree of gravity and culpability of the different sins compared with one another. Thus a seven years' penance with bread and water was imposed upon a homicide; one of seven years' penance likewise upon a married man who had gone astray with a foreign woman or a virgin; whereas they condemned to five years of the same penance for imaginary sins and idle superstitions, against which they had not been able to warn the people, after eight centuries of preaching and confession: such as recourse to sorcerers, confidence in diviners, *ad sorcerias recurrunt, ad divinationes credunt*; ten years for having sworn on an altar and committed perjury; seven years for having worshipped idols, practised enchantments, divinations, or consulted destiny, *coluisti idola, vel incantationes, aut divinationes vel sortes*; seven years for having placed one's child upon a roof or in an oven, for the purpose of recovering his health, *posuisti filium tuum super tectum aut in fornace per sanitatem*. We find, moreover, in these penitentials or rituals a prohibition to eat blood or stifled animals—a prohibition, which, by the by, is formally stated in the New Testament, but which Christians have had no scruple in violating for several centuries. They likewise proscribe as unclean the use of aliments and liquors that have been in contact with certain animals: they enjoin

married people to observe continence during the whole of Lent. As to those who would not abstain during all that time, they may be exempted by doing one year's penance or paying to the Church the sum of twenty-six sous.* This is a kind of impost to which no power had hitherto thought of submitting its subjects. Lastly, an intercourse with male or female demons is liable to penance, &c.

After laying down a catalogue of enormous crimes, the ritual we have been quoting fixes the number of years of penance to which everybody ought to be subject, and then it adds: "But as this penance is difficult to some persons, it may be replaced by compensation in reciting psalms and prayers, either by night or day."† It afterwards indicates the number of psalms which must be recited to compensate one, two, or three months' penance, or for one of a whole year. It prescribes twenty for the latter case: it afterwards puts the most gormandizing penitent at his ease, by telling him, "He may afterwards make use of all the ali-

* Qui in quadragesima ante Pascha cognoverit uxorem suam, et noluerit abstinere ab ea, uno anno pœniteat, et pretium suum, videlicet xxvi. solidos ad Ecclesiam tribuat, aut pauperibus dividat.—(Apud Burcha., lib. xix., c. 76.)

† Et ideo qui sic ista ad implere non potest, consilium damus ut in psalmis et orationibus vel vigiliis in noctibus, sive diebus aliquot in pœnitentiam pro hoc esse debeat. Id est., etc.—(Muratori, t. v., *Antiqui medii ævi.*, p. 725.)

ments that God affords him, when he has chanted his psalms; he will have afterwards an entire remission of his sins.....But as for him who knows no psalms, and, prescribed to fast, can for no entire day do so, let him give alms in money according to his means.”*

So we see they had proceeded gradually, in order ultimately to gain their point, of making people redeem their sins by money. Indeed, canonical penances being both very long and very severe, especially such as prescribed fasting on bread and water—a diet so contrary to the sensual inclinations of that period—people preferred to get exempted by reciting a few prayers, or, still better, by giving money to the priests and monks, who dispensed the sinner from this duty by saying a few masses or reciting a part of the service in his behalf. The penitents believed they had thus fully satisfied divine justice for the crimes with which they were defiled; for these same priests told them “that God does not judge twice, but that, having submitted to their confessor, their sins are blotted out for ever.”†

* *Et omnem cibum quod ei Dominus dederit, postquam psallit sumat . . . et post hæc remissio pleniter est. . . . Et qui psalmos nescit, et jejunare debet, et non potest per unumquemque diem, det denarium valentem in elemosina, aut quantum potest.—(Muratori, t. v., *Antiqui medii ævi*, p. 725, 726.)*

† *Hoc scire potes, frater, quod Dominus non judicabit bis, sed omnia in vera confessione lavantur.—(Id., *ibid.*, p. 728.)*

The custom of consulting the priest upon the kind of penance to be performed, gave rise to formulas in which they were graduated according to the opinion of the Casuists of those periods. Upon each of these sins a particular kind and an especial duration of penance were imposed. From the writings of Saint Gregory, of Nicea, and Saint Basil, we find that this practice existed in their time. The confessors, having before their eyes the rituals wherein all the sins were inscribed, noted those of which anyone accused himself, afterwards summed up the days, months, and years of penance attached to each, and formed of them a total and a duration of time which they prescribed to their penitents. But the variety of sins, and especially the frequent backslidings of a great number of persons into the same faults, extended the duration of canonical penalties to one, two, or three hundred years, and even more. As the life of a man would not have sufficed, and as, moreover, they perceived the impossibility of subjecting sinners for all the rest of their lives to such severe penalties and intolerable austerity, they had recourse to compensation and the commutation of punishments; and whole years of arduous penance were redeemed by a few easy practices—an absolution but little onerous to most people, and very lucrative to the clergy. Thus, for instance, they who, by reason of the number and gravity

of their sins, were bound down to a penance of three hundred years, were at liberty to escape it by paying down seven thousand eight hundred sous. In case any one could not pay in ready money, he gave up his territorial property reserving the rents to himself during his own life. We find in the following passage the extract of an act of donation made to certain monks, which is sufficient to give an idea of the spirit in which these donations were made: "Having one day reflected that the impious and sinners who neglect to redeem their sins, *impii et peccatores. qui peccata sua redimere negligunt*, are condemned to eternal pains with demons, suddenly God inspired us with his divine mercy; our heart was touched; and it was with fear, eagerness, and anxiety that we sought the counsel of priests and religious men, *quærere consilium a sacerdotibus et religiosis viris*, in order to know how we could escape the wrath of the eternal judge. The counsel that has been given us is that, among the virtues, there is none greater than charity, and that the act we ought to prefer to all others, is to give to the monastery a portion of our wealth."* This pas-

* Et concilio accepto, quod nihil sit melius aliud inter eleemosinadrums virtutes, quam si de propriis rebus et substantiis nostris in monasterio dederimus.—(Murat., Antiq. med. ævi, t. v., p. 743.)

sage sufficiently shows what was the power of confession, especially among the monks, *religiosis viris*, to persuade ignorant and superstitious men that, of all virtues, the most meritorious, *nihil est melius inter virtutes*, and the one it sufficed to possess and to show, in order to obtain the remission of all their sins, was to enrich the clergy.

It is not only in the rituals or penitentials we have quoted that the nomenclature of the commutations of penalties and that of the taxes imposed upon penitents by the popes, bishops, and monks, is to be found. There existed such in every diocese in the middle ages; but they varied according to the period and the spirit in which they were composed. If a greater number of them have not reached our own time, it is because they were kept secret in the hands of a limited number of confessors without it being lawful to communicate them to the laity. Accordingly, we find that Pope Nicholas, on being consulted thereon in 1366, replied: "It is not meet that laymen should be acquainted with these things, for they have no right to judge the acts of the priesthood."*

The custom of obtaining absolution for sins

* Nam sæculares tale quid habere non convenit, nimirum quibus per id quemquam judicandi ministerium nullum tribuitur.—(Murat., t. v., p. 741.)

having been gradually introduced into the Latin Church, the popes took almost exclusive possession of this lucrative branch of revenue. Leo X. then ordered lists and catalogues of sins to be drawn up at Rome, designating the sum that was to be paid to obtain absolution for them. Therein we find also permissions and dispensations which concern either the laity or the ecclesiastics, and for the obtaining of which payment was to be made, as is also the custom in the present day in several cases. This ecclesiastical budget is entitled: "*Taxes of the Apostolic Chancery*," and "*Taxes of the Holy Apostolic Penitentiary*."* This monstrous abuse, as pernicious to morality as to religion, was, for several centuries, set working on a large scale, and procured considerable revenues to the court of Rome. To satisfy the reader's curiosity, we give here an extract of a few of the articles which are found in this work:—

For a town to be entitled to coin money, 500 drachms (*gros*).†

Remission given to a rich man for the wealth which he has absconded with, 50 d.

* *Taxe cancellariæ apostolicæ et Taxæ sanctæ pœnitentiariæ apostolicæ.*—(Romæ, 15, 14.)

† I have not been able to fix the exact value of the money designated in this book of taxes under the name of *gros*.—(The eighth of an ounce of silver?)—Transl.

For a poor man, 20 d.

For a layman not to be bound to observe fasts commanded by the Church, and to eat cheese, 20 d.

For permission given to counts to eat meat and eggs on forbidden days, on account of their health, 12 d.

For commuting a vow made by a layman to visit the tomb of the apostles, 12 d.

For enabling a nobleman to receive the sacraments with his family, and to be buried in a forbidden place, 30 d.

For exempting a layman from a vow thoughtlessly made, 12 d.

For allowing a ship to sail to convey merchandize to the infidels, 100 d.

For enabling a king and queen to procure indulgences, as if they had been to Rome, 200 d.

For permission to have mass celebrated in a forbidden place, 10 d.

For absolution at the point of death, for one person, 14 d.

For granting a confessional to a brotherhood, 50 d.

For a convent, 50 d.

For the absolution of a king who may have visited the Holy Sepulchre without the pope's permission, 100 d.

For absolution for the excesses and offences of a layman, 12 d.

For those of a town, 100 d.

For an abbot to be able to absolve the apostate monks of the convents subject to him, 16 d.

For an indulgence of two years for a church and chapel, 20 d.

For an indulgence of one year and fifteen days, when the angelic salutation is said at the tolling of the bell, 12 d.

For an indulgence for those who visit the body of Jesus Christ, when it is publicly exposed, 12 d.

For the absolution of any one practising usury in secret, 7 d.

For the absolution of any one who has been intimate with a woman in a church, and has done any other harm, 6 d.

For the absolution of a concubinary and dispensation of irregularities, 7 d.

For the absolution of him who has *connu charnellement* any female of his kindred, 5 d.

For the absolution of him who has violated a virgin, 6 d.

For the absolution of a simoniacal priest, 7 d.
Idem, if he be a monk, 8 d.

For the absolution of perjury, 6 d.

For the absolution of any one who has revealed the confession of another person, 7 d.

For the absolution of a man or woman who, during the time of interdict, has carried out bodies for burial, or has buried them, 9 d.

For permission to eat meat, butter, eggs, and whatever is made of milk, during Lent or other fast days, 7 d.

For the absolution of him who has killed his father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or any other of his lay relations, 5 or 6 d.

(For, if the person killed were an ecclesiastic, the murderer would be bound to visit the apostolic see.)

For the absolution of a husband who, beating his wife, causes abortion, 6 d.

For a woman who takes any beverage or employs any other means to cause her child to perish, 5 d.

For a dispensation for a priest present or absent, *qui abscindit sous testiculos*, 16 d.

For an absolution for spoilers, incendiaries, thieves, and homicidal laymen, 8 d.

It would be supererogatory to give further extracts from a book which contains more than eight hundred cases subject to the apostolic tax. What has just been read will enable us to form an idea of it. The reader may have remarked the disproportion of the taxes which ought to be in the same ratio as the culpability or the favours granted; this was especially striking in the first case mentioned, since the concession in question is in no way connected with the sacrament of penance. We may also remark the facility granted to the rich to

atone with 50 d. for a fortune acquired by pillage or other unjust means. But what is not less scandalous, is to see that absolution for the most enormous crimes is taxed much lower than the non-observance of a few insignificant practices prescribed by the court of Rome. Thus, he who has killed his father, mother, sister, or wife, obtains absolution by paying 5 drachms; he who has committed incest is absolved also for 5 drachms; and the woman who has caused abortion 8 drachms. On the other hand, a monk who has passed from one monastery to another, without permission, will get absolution only by paying 16 d. A king who may have been to pay a visit to the holy sepulchre, without the pope's permission, can be absolved only for the sum of 100 drachms. They value at 9 drachms the absolution of a man or woman who may have performed the last funeral rites to a person, though it be their father or mother, because it may have pleased a Bishop of Rome, some four or five hundred leagues off, to pronounce excommunication against them. They grant a license for conveying merchandise to the infidels, for the sums of 100 drachms. And a king and queen may gain indulgences, as if they had performed the journey to Rome, by paying into the apostolic chancery the sum of 200 drachms.

These prescriptions—favours, if you will—each more fantastical, singular, and absurd than the

other, and all originating in sacerdotal confession, end with an article entitled: "*De absolutionibus mortuorum*," in which we find an article that we copy textually: "*Pro mortuo excommunicato, pro quo supplicant consanguinei, littera absolutionis venit, ducat. 1, carl. 9.*"

Thus, the pope exalting his power to a level with that of God, gives, at the request of the relations, letters of absolution to deceased persons in a state of excommunication; so that a soul hurled to the lowest pit of hell can be got back by paying to the holy penitentiary of Rome the sum of one ducat nine carlins!

We will end this chapter with a literal quotation of the *formula of plenary absolution*, prescribed by the tribunal of the apostolic chancery:—

Misereatur tui, etc. Dominus noster Jesus Christus, per merita suæ sanctissimæ passionis te absolvat; et ego auctoritate ejusdem et beatorum Pauli et Petri apostolorum ejus, ac santissimi Domini nostri papæ tibi concessa, et in hac parte mihi commissa.

Te absolvo, primo, omnibus censuris ecclesiasticis per te quomodo libet incursis, deinde ab omnibus peccatis, delictis et excessibus tuis hactenus per te commissis quantum cumque enormibus, etiam sedi apostolicæ reservatis.

In quantum claves sanctæ matris Ecclesiæ se extendunt, remittendo tibi per *plenariam indulgen-*

tiam omnem pœnam in purgatorio pro præmissis tibi debitam ; et restituo te sanctis sacramentis Ecclesiæ et unitati fidelium, ac innocentiae et puritati in qua eras, quando baptizatus fuisti. Ita quod tibi decedenti clausæ sint portæ pœnarum, et apertæ sint januæ paradisi deliciarum. Quod si non morieris, salva sit ista gratia, quando alias fueris in mortis articulo. In nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

The reader has been able to judge, from the facts we have just laid before him, what have been the consequences of sacerdotal confession to morality, as well as to religion. By virtue of those two words, *te absolvo*, accompanied with a *plenary indulgence*, and a few pieces of money, people obtained forgiveness and remission of crimes, *however enormous they might be*, even so as to be restored to the *same state of innocence and purity as that in which they were after they had received baptism ; so that this absolution stopped you on the one hand upon the threshold of the gates of hell, and, on the other, opened to you the gates of a delightful paradise, whatever might be the period of your death.*

This would, perhaps, be the place to enter into some details concerning those numerous dispensations which the court of Rome has gradually reserved to itself, in order to increase its power and riches ; but, in order to avoid prolixity, we shall remain satisfied with producing the opinion of a

saint—a man celebrated in ecclesiastical annals—which will suffice to annihilate all such pretensions. It was in the twelfth century, that Saint Bernard said to such as were simple enough to ask the pope for indulgences: “But why do you ask his permission in order that what is not permitted may become permitted? You want to do what is not permitted; but what was not permitted was wrong—and yet you have asked permission to do wrong....What! has that ceased to be wrong, or has it become less wrong because the pope has permitted it? And who knows whether it be not wrong to consent to wrong?”*

* S. Bern., Epist. 7, ad Adam. mon.

CHAPTER II.

INDULGENCES, PILGRIMAGES, CRUSADES, A
SOURCE OF POWER AND RICHES TO THE
CLERGY.

THE primitive Church admitted, in its penitentiary system, two kinds of punishments, one temporal, and the other eternal. To obtain salvation, it was necessary for sinners to submit first to the temporal penance imposed and determined by the canons of the Church. As to everlasting punishment, it was remitted by God alone, who, touched with a sincere repentance, pardoned the offences committed against Him. Later, the bishops and popes altered this penitential system; this happened about the seventh century. In place of the severe penance prescribed by the ancient canons, they substituted prayers, works, and practices easy to perform. Priests, in attributing to themselves, even to the exclusion of

God, the right of retaining and remitting, and, at the same time, that of inflicting a penalty, allowed themselves also to alter, mitigate, replace, and compensate these penalties, even by retributions—that is, what they called indulgences.

It is needless to remark that indulgences sprang from sacerdotal confession, which, grounded on divine right, may dispose everything for the advantage and interests of the Church. The admission of purgatory must, as one may imagine, have produced the same results, especially in a pecuniary point of view. This is, at all events, the opinion of a learned theologian who wrote about four hundred years ago: “All Catholics,” says he, “believe in the existence of purgatory; yet there is no mention made of it among the ancients, or at all events very rarely: the Greeks even up to the present time do not believe in it. There was no mention made of indulgences as long as there was no question of purgatory; for on this depends all the importance of indulgences. What is the use of indulgences, if you do away with purgatory? Indulgences began therefore at the moment when people were afraid of the torments of hell.”*

* Polyd. Virgil. de rerum invent., lib. viii., c. 1.—(Polydore Virgil, born at Urbino about 1470, took orders, and professed polite literature at Bologna. Being sent to England by Pope Alexander VI. to receive the “Peter’s pence,” he was much favoured both by Henry VII. and Henry

It was about the commencement of the ninth century that indulgences began to be multiplied. In the beginning, they were granted equally by all the bishops of Christendom: at first they were given only for the remission of canonical or temporal penalties, and not for everlasting punishments, as was afterwards the case; for the ancient belief of the Church was, that the latter could be remitted only through the merits of Jesus Christ, or those of the saints and the faithful. These are what were called the treasurers of the Church. But the popes, thinking they possessed the same divine grace, through the effect of their *omniscience*, infallibility and sanctity, were so bold as to grant indulgences by which they equally remitted temporal and eternal punishments. They have found theologians and even saints who have approved and defended this impious doctrine. We may quote Saint Thomas of Aquinas, who says: "The guardian and dispenser of this precious treasure is the Roman pontiff, and he has, consequently the power to assign to every one, as he shall think fit, a portion of this exhaustless source of grace, which may be applied with propriety to the guilty, and is sufficient to deliver them from all their crimes."

VIII., and in 1507 became Archdeacon of Wells. In 1550, he obtained permission to return to his native city, where he died in or before 1555.—Transl.)

When this omnipotence of the popes, which—so they say—emanated from Jesus Christ, had become prevalent throughout Christendom, the popes reserved exclusively to themselves, and to the detriment of the other bishops, the right of granting indulgences, in order to acquire for themselves alone the vast wealth collected throughout the Christian world. Thus it was, by the abolition of the ancient canonical and penitential discipline, that those monstrous abuses increased which, by facilitating the pardon of all sorts of irregularities and crimes, augmented their number. It was especially in the commencement of the eleventh century that the concessions of indulgences became more frequent. Pope Victor III. made a successful use of them in 1087. Desirous of making war on the Saracens, he managed to raise a large army in Italy, by promising his soldiers the remission of all their sins,—*sub remissione peccatorum omnium*. Urban II., struck with the success of such a policy, provoked, in 1096, the first crusade against the Mahometans, the possessors of the Holy Land. The councils came to the support of this system, as we see in that of Clermont and in the first œcumenical one of Latran, in which indulgences were granted to those who were going to fight against the Saracens of Spain.

The same distribution of indulgences was practised, in the two following centuries, for similar

reasons, such as the extirpation of the heretics. Thus, crimes were pardoned on condition of committing greater enormities. Such have been, more than once, the results of sacerdotal confession. Alexander III., especially, multiplied indulgences with boundless liberality. "He distributed," says Baronius, on the first Sunday in every month, "as many indulgences as there are grains in two handfuls of sand."*

Another pope, Boniface IX., showed the same kind of generosity, accompanied with an inordinate love of money. "I do not think," says Theodoric Niem, "there ever was a man who sought to procure money in such an ingenious but dishonest manner as Boniface IX. . . . He sent collectors throughout Christendom, charged with selling indulgences. They thus extorted, in a very short time, vast sums of money, which sometimes amounted, for a single province, to a hundred thousand florins. Everybody was eager to buy the remission of his sins, without doing penance."†

. . . "He invaded the wealth of the Templars on all sides."‡

During the long schism which desolated the

* Similiter concessit Alexander III., primis dominicalibus mensium, tantam indulgentiam quantam arenam capere potuit cum ambabus manibus.—(Baron., Annal., an. 1177.)

† Hist. schism. papist., quoted by Poter.

‡ Templariorum bona ubique diripuit.—(Platina,)

Church, popes and anti-popes were seen to grant indulgences to their partisans, whilst they excommunicated their adversaries. Alexander VI. used with success this treasure of the Church to pay the army which he destined to the conquest of Romagna. It assisted Julius II. and Leo X. to raise the superb basilica of Saint Peter. These popes caused indulgences to be preached throughout Christendom, with permission to eat eggs and cheese, to those who would give money for this pious work, and they farmed this tax upon consciences, in order the sooner and more easily to receive the amount. We may judge what enormous sums must have been raised by the sale of indulgences delivered for the construction of so vast and magnificent a monument. The popes granted also the same favour for the erection of certain churches; reserving to themselves, however, a share of the amount. Mariana relates, in his History of Spain, "that Pope Paul II. having granted an indulgence to such as would give a certain sum of money, the richest were taxed at four crowns, smaller fortunes at three, and the poor at two, on condition that two-thirds of the receipts should be employed in the construction of the grand church of Segovia, and that the other third should be paid into the treasury of the court of Rome."*

* *Adjectalege, ut confectæ duobus tertiis in struendam*

These Christians, in order to popularise and propagate their religion, adopted, almost without any exception, the practices of paganism, sanctifying and modifying them according to their own dogmas and principles. Thus it was that they adopted the pilgrimages in use in almost all the religions of antiquity. This practice, considered in a religious point of view, has the great advantage of exciting piety, and still more frequently, fanaticism, by the allurements of novelty and curiosity, to which man is so naturally inclined: accordingly, pilgrimages were in great vogue among the Christians as among the Pagans. The sixth of the good works, prescribed in the law of Zoroaster, consists in making a journey annually to the principal temple of *Tou-Pags*, in order there to pray to God.* The Chinese make pilgrimages upon their mountains. There are several places in the Indies which attract a great concourse of pilgrims. Hurdwar and Juggernaut are especially celebrated on this account. Pilgrims repair in crowds to this first city of Tartary, from Persia, from all the provinces of Asia, from the Island of Ceylon, and from Arabia: never was there a greater concourse at Jerusalem or Rome. Sinners wash in the Ganges to obtain

templi maximi Segobiensis collectis, pars tertia ipsi pontifici servaretur.—(Mariana, Histor. Hispan.)

* Sad-Der, porte 6.

the remission of their sins; devotees acquire new merits by touching that water. Juggernaut, situated at the mouth of the same river, is a place equally favourable to the sanctification of souls, but penance there is more arduous and severe: there it is, indeed, that unfortunate wretches, to secure celestial bliss, get themselves crushed under the colossal chariot bearing the statue of Krishna.

It is well known that the Greeks and Romans went on pilgrimages to temples of renown, with the conviction that their prayers and sacrifices would be received by the gods more favourably in those privileged places than in ordinary temples. To obtain these favours, crowds went from Europe and Asia to the Temple of Diana, at Ephesus; to that of Apollo, at Delphi; to that of Ceres, in Sicily, &c. We will not speak of the pilgrimages prescribed by the law of Islamism. It is at Mecca that they find the road which leads to paradise.

Pilgrimages, as a remission of sins and a means of salvation, were in use in Christendom even in the earliest ages, since Saint Jerome speaks of them in these terms:—"Though the Britons be separated from our world by the ocean, yet, those among them who have made any progress in religion, forsaking the remote climes of the west, visit those sacred places at Jerusalem which they

know only by name and from the Scriptures.”* Not only were very great merits attached to the visiting of the tombs of the martyrs, but in the eighth century they carried things still further, by granting the remission of sins to whosoever would visit the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, the tombs of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, or even other persons celebrated in the annals of Catholicism. This practice had become so much a point of faith, that it was observed by princes, nobles, nay by the people, by bishops, priests, monks, and nuns. The greatest sinners were even enjoined to lead a wandering life, in the manner of Cain, or rather of the priests of Cybele.

The court of Rome found in this kind of penance, substituted for the canonical regulations of the primitive Church, a twofold advantage: that of dispensing, by means of a contribution, such as were utterly unable to perform the penance imposed upon them, as well as those who had, through inconsiderate devotion, made a vow to go on these pilgrimages: and, secondly, that of enticing to Rome, *ad liminæ apostolorum*, with the bait of indulgences, a considerable concourse of foreigners. The bishops and monks had brought these pilgrimages into vogue in certain other churches, such as those of Saint Juan de Compostella, in

* Hieronim., Epist. 17.

Spain, of Tours in France, and Nostra Signora di Loretto in Italy. More than two hundred thousand pilgrims, women, and children, went often four hundred leagues to visit the *santa casa* in which the Holy Virgin was born, betrothed, and married. There was a time when the concourse of penitents was so very considerable at the convent of Notre Dame, near the towns of Assisi and Perugia, that as many as a hundred thousand pilgrims were seen crowding to visit the church of this convent, belonging to the Franciscans, on the days of the festival of Notre Dame des Anges.

The considerable profits which those towns, as well as the clergy, derived from this practice, drew the attention of the popes, who from their position and powerful influence, contrived to concentrate them almost exclusively in Rome. They excited the fervour of the penitents by the numerous indulgences attached to the stations or visits made in different churches. According to the book of stations of Rome, there are every day in the year, in the church of Saint John of Latran, forty-eight days, and forty-eight times forty days of indulgences, with the remission of one-third part of all kinds of sins, and as much in the churches of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Mary Major, Saint Laurence, Saint Sebastian, and in that of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem. A hundred years of indulgences may be gained in the church of Arca-

Cœli; and four hundred years in that of Saint Sylvester.

Bernard Conno relates, in the third part of his History of Milan, that in 1391, the Milanese being unable to go and earn indulgences at Rome, on account of the war, Boniface IX. granted to the city of Milan the same indulgences as those which had been given to Rome; namely, that every subject of Gaspare Visconti should be absolved from all his sins, even though he were neither repentant nor confessed, *si anche non fosse contrito ne confesso*; on condition of sojourning ten consecutive days at Milan, of visiting five churches every day, and of offering to the church dedicated to the Holy Virgin two-thirds of the expense he would have incurred by going to Rome, of which oblation two parts were to remain the property of that church, and the other to be for the pope.

If the facts related by the two authors I have just quoted—but whom I cannot warrant, having been unable to procure their writings—be exact, it must be owned that this invention of sacerdotal confession and absolution, which maintains the sinner in a saintly quietude, is not less comfortable to the patient than lucrative to the physician.

Moreover, the churches we have just named are not the only ones which enjoy this kind of privilege; there are few in Rome, in all Italy, and especially in Spain, that have not obtained the

same favours from some of the popes. We generally find in those churches certain privileged altars, at which a remission of sins, more or less extensive, may be obtained, not only for the living, but also for the dead, *pro defunctis*. To obtain it, it suffices to hear mass there, to receive the communion, or to recite a few prayers. The mercies of the Church are so abundant in Spain, that there is not a town publishing a newspaper where we do not find in the first column of it: *Today a soul is released from purgatory* in such a church: *Hoy se saca anima*. This I have seen advertised wherever there exists a newspaper in that monkish country.

Urban II. ventures so far as to assert that indulgences granted by the popes, for certain pilgrimages, may replace true penitence.* The Council of Clermont is no less precise on this subject.†

Confessors could give particular indulgences in their spiritual jurisdiction and in the tribunal of penance, according to the axiom *ejusdem est ligare et solvere*: he who can bind can also loose. “The bishops gave forty days of indulgences, and the cardinals a hundred.” It is to be presumed that,

* Monemus igitur et exhortamur in Domino, et in remissionem peccatorum injungimus. . . . Si in vera pœnitentia decesserunt, et peccatorum indulgentiam et fructum æternæ mercedis se non dubitent habituros.

† Iter illud pro omni pœnitentia ex reputetur.

like the popes, they did not grant such favours gratuitously. As to the pope, their generosity was limited by no law. "It belongs but to the pope alone, who represents Jesus Christ, to grant indulgences of one hundred, two hundred, or even several thousand years, even as it is determined by different concessions of the popes, and by other canons, at different times and places, and for different reasons."*

These indulgences were multiplied, *ad infinitum*, especially by the concessions made to the monks, who did not fail to turn them to their own advantage. Thus, when the Inquisitors made an *auto-da-fé*, they announced to the people that the persons present at this ceremony and at the lecture on the faith, pronounced by the Inquisitor, would earn the customary indulgences.† They were likewise obtained by wearing the habit of a monastic order, the girdle of Saint Francis, a scapulary, a chapelet, a medal, a consecrated image, the wood of the true cross, or the relics of such a saint; by visiting such a church or some

* Non valent cardinales ultra centum dies indulgentiæ. Soli papæ, Christus potest illam tot dierum et annorum mille millium indulgentiam concedere. Qualis reposita reperitur in diversis concessionibus, summorum pontificum vel aliorum sub variis temporibus, locis, causis.—(Gerson, Opusc., de Indulgens.)

† Directorium Inquisitor, part. iii.

privileged calvary; by reciting a prayer given in honour of the Virgin Mary, or some other saint, &c.

It is, therefore, not surprising to see this torrent of indulgences—which took its source in auricular confession, and left, in its course, a golden deposit upon the sacerdotal domain—increase in so prodigious a manner. But the advantages were too great not to give rise to forgery. Accordingly we find, from the canons of the councils, that the bishops, and especially the monks, forged indulgences, or reproduced such as had been granted only for a limited period or for a particular circumstance. Forgers imagined bulls of indulgences which they sold to the people.

Indulgences were not identified solely with bodies inert or fashioned with the hand into bones and the remains of the bodies of men celebrated in the annals of Christianity, to which a ready homage was paid. Living persons were also visited, whose daily existence was miraculous. Such was Saint Simeon Stylites, who remained standing for forty years upon a column of several cubits, scarcely taking any food, and even totally abstaining from it during the forty days of Lent. The author of the life of this saint informs us “that a great concourse of people came to see him from the farthest confines of the West,

particularly from Spain, Gaul, and Great Britain.*”

We find in the Abbé Salicet's *Antidotarius Animæ*, indulgences of every description. The books and rules of the different brotherhoods make us acquainted with a great variety of them. Therein we find calendars in which is indicated for most days in the year a remission of sins for such as perform certain devotions, as the visiting certain churches, the reciting of a certain number of *Paters* and *Aves*, or the hearing of mass in appointed places and at the altar of such a saint.

Fleury makes us perceive how absurd is the system of the redemption of sins by means of indulgences and pilgrimages, when he says: “Canonical punishments had been rendered impracticable by being multiplied according to the number of sins, whence had arisen the invention of commuting them in order to redeem whole years of them in a few days; besides the compensation of penance, pilgrimages to Rome, Compostella, or Jerusalem, had long been employed.”†

The same author acknowledges the irregularities resulting from pilgrimages, when he says: “As early as the ninth century, people complained of several abuses that had crept into it.

* Theodoret, *Vie de Sim Styl.*, c. 26.

† Fleury, *Sisi. Disc.*, No. 2.

Criminal priests and clerks pretended to be thereby purified and “re-habilitated.” Lords availed themselves of it to practise exactions on their subjects to contribute to the expenses of the journey; and it was a pretext for the poor to beg and live a vagabond life. Certain among them used to overrun the country, naked and loaded with chains, exciting the horror of everybody; and it is true that, for homicide and other atrocious crimes, penitents had sometimes been commanded to live also a wandering life, bearing the signs of their misery. But never were pilgrimages so celebrated as since the eleventh century. Universal hostilities having subsided, and pilgrims being considered as sacred persons, everybody would go to places of devotion, even princes and kings. King Robert passed every Lent in pilgrimages, and performed the journey to Rome. Bishops made no scruple to leave their churches for the same object. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem, among others, became very frequent about the year 1033.”*

Experience has proved that all these practices, very lucrative to the clergy, so far from being useful to religion and morals, have only served to corrupt them. Boniface, Archbishop of Mayence, wrote in the year 740 to the Archbishop of Can-

* *Mœurs des Chrétiens*, No. 43.

terbury, and exhorted him to prevent the nuns and lay-sisters of England from leaving their country and going on pilgrimages to Rome, because those women became corrupted before they returned to their own country, and many of them became common women and harlots in the cities of France or Italy.* In ages of ignorance and superstition, nations, ever submissive to the authority of the priesthood, and swayed according to their interests, believed, conformably to the doctrine they were taught, that the visiting a tomb and pronouncing a few words over it sufficed to redeem all their sins, and dispense them from fulfilling their duties as Christians. This is demonstrated by the 45th canon of the second council of Châlons, held in 818: "They fall into a serious error," says this council, "who, under pretence of praying, repair inconsiderately to Rome or Tours. Priests or deacons who lead a dissolute life, believe they fulfil the functions of their ministry and obtain the remission of their sins, by going to visit those places. Even so, laymen imagine they sin or have sinned with impunity, *se impune aut peccare, aut peccasse*, because they go to pray in those places. It is under the pretence of these pilgrimages that the mighty authorize themselves to acquire riches by oppressing the people, *multa*

* Spelm. Concil., t. i., p. 237.

acquirunt, multos pauperum opprimunt. They affect to visit holy places from piety, whereas they are swayed only by avarice. There are paupers whose only aim is to procure themselves more abundant alms, *ut majorem habeant materiam mendicandi.* Some there are, who, wandering about to every part, pretend to be going to those places, and who are so insensate that they imagine they are absolved from all their sins by merely beholding those holy places: *ut putent se sanctorum locorum sola visione a peccatis purgari.**

Never did a philosopher more truly state the inconveniences and fatal consequences arising from the institution of confession, than the canon of the council which we have just produced. Instead of repressing crime, it has authorized to sin with impunity, *impune peccare*; it has countenanced injustice and violence among the powerful, *multos pauperum opprimunt*; it has encouraged idleness and mendicity, *materiam mendicandi*; and lastly it has tranquillized the conscience of the criminal and appeased his remorse, by securing him impunity for his crimes by the performance of common-place or insignificant practices, *sanctorum locorum visione.* The fatal effects of this species of vagrancy, known under the name of pilgrimage, were so keenly felt by civil authority in dif-

* Concil. Cabilion., can. 45.

ferent countries, that it has endeavoured to repress them by penal laws: this is what happened more than once in France, and noticeably in 1738, when "Every Frenchman was forbidden to go on any pilgrimage out of the kingdom, without a permission from the king, upon pain of being sent to the galleys."*

Canonical punishments had fallen almost into desuetude, through the effect of indulgences and pilgrimages, when the crusades, far more meritorious than the latter, gave, as Fleury expresses it, the mortal blow to ancient discipline. These two causes of destruction proceeded equally from the opinion which prevailed in Christendom during those periods of ignorance and superstition: people then believed that penance, whatever it might be, could, being imposed by a priest, absolve from every crime, even from those committed during the time this very penance was being performed. "As long as the crusades lasted," says Fleury, "they served in lieu of penance, not only for those who took the cross voluntarily, but even for all great criminals, to whom the bishops gave absolution only on condition of serving in person for a certain time in the Holy Land, or of maintaining there a certain number of armed men."† It was

* *Repertoire de Jurisprudence* (mot *Pèlerinage*).

† Fleury, *Disc. sur l'Hist. Ecclés.*, disc. vi., n. 11.

this fatal opinion which led the crusaders to give themselves up to debauchery, to pillage, and to commit violence, and even to massacre Christians as well as Mahometans.

Accordingly, we find that the popes knew how to take advantage of a means so serviceable to the increase of their power, and to the establishment of their dominion over all the nations of Christendom—a means equally efficacious with religious men and with those who set no bounds to their passions. Fleury, who was unwilling to unfold to his readers what was most criminal in the conduct of the crusaders, describes them as follows: “They were, in a manner of speaking, raw sinners, who, without any conversion of heart or any previous preparation, except perhaps some indifferent confession, went, for the expiation of their sins, to expose themselves to the most dangerous chances of committing new ones..... We must confess that the crusade served as a pretext to people who had debts, not to pay them; to malefactors, to escape the punishment due to their crimes; to unruly monks, to quit their cloister; to corrupted women, to continue more freely their irregularities, for some of them followed those armies, and a few were disguised as men. Nay, in the very army of Saint Louis, in his quarter, and near his tents, places devoted to licentiousness were to be found.”*

* Fleury, *Disc. sur l'Hist. Ecclés.*, disc. vi., n. 11.

The same author thus expresses himself in another work: "Accordingly, it is certain, from the testimony of historians, that the armies of the crusaders were not only like other armies, but still worse; that all sorts of vices prevailed therein, both such as the pilgrims had brought with them from their own country and those they had learnt abroad. Lastly, if those voyages served to correct a few sins, they were much less those of the Latin Christians than of the Schismatics, for whom they were terrible scourges of God. A great number of bishops, priests, and monks, took the cross; some, urged by genuine zeal, several by libertinism, and they believed themselves authorised to carry arms against the infidels."*

We count eight crusades undertaken to effect the conquest of a tomb of which there remain no more vestiges than of those of Moses or Zoroaster; and those wars—impious because unjust—ended only in causing the slaughter of several millions of victims, either innocent or led astray by religious fanaticism. But the policy of the popes did not halt before such considerations, when the point in question was what it termed the glory of God and the interests of the Church—a powerful lever, the latter—the effect of which has been multiplied a hundred-fold by means of

* Fleury, *Mœurs des Chrét.*

auricular confession and indulgences. Thus it was that, armed with the sign of the cross, it managed to form those numerous crusades in the name of God: in the East, against the Mahometans; in Spain, against the Moors; in Saxony, Prussia, Livonia, and other northern countries, against the pagans; in Germany, against the Stadings and other heretics; in France, against the Vaudois and Albigenses; in short, against whatever kings or people refused to acknowledge its usurpations or haughty dominion. Thus, also, it excited multitudes of people against each other; princes against princes, and Christians against Christians, whoever they might be: it cared little when the question was to effect its purpose.

The first crusade, preached in 1093, and commanded by a fanatical ignorant monk, was composed of eighty thousand vagrants, who pillaged and devastated all the places on their passage, even before they had reached the land of the infidels. They besieged, took, and ransacked a city of Hungary; soon after, being attacked by the Bulgarians, their army was reduced to twenty thousand men; and this remnant was exterminated by Solyman. The other chiefs of the second expedition, at the head of an army of a hundred thousand knights and eighty thousand foot, took Nice, and afterwards Jerusalem, the inhabitants of which they massacred; doubtless to avenge, on

the Mahometans, the blood of Jesus Christ shed by the Jews. But Solyman, who retook this city after a possession of ninety-nine years by the Europeans, gave the latter a noble example of humanity in sparing the lives of the inhabitants.

The second crusade was preached by another monk, a race at all times devoted to the orders of Rome. This man, quite as fanatical as Peter the Hermit, but far more intelligent and shrewd, refused to be the commander of this holy militia: he confined his part to preaching, confessing, and promising indulgences; he, however, ventured so far as to predict, in the name of God, a success that was far from being realised; for this new army, composed of three hundred thousand individuals, was destroyed by debauchery or by the sword of the enemy.

The popes, who never retreat before reverses or obstacles, provoked a third, fourth, and fifth crusade. The army produced by the latter departs in the name of Jesus Christ, arrives before Constantinople, takes, and pillages that city, and exercises every kind of cruelty upon those for the faith of whom they had come to fight. Pope Innocent III. approved of this conquest, thinking that it would serve to extend his power. "Those people," said he, "are obstinate schismatics, children of the church, who have been in revolt against her for several centuries, and deserve to

be chastised. If the dread of our arms bring them back to their duty, well and good; if not, they must be exterminated and the country repopled with Catholics."

After a few other successes, being enfeebled by their own divisions and the plague, or by fighting, the remainder of this army sought their safety in flight.

The sixth crusade, still provoked by the monks, in 1219, saw the Christians, masters of Jerusalem, make a treaty, in which it was stated that the temple of Jesus Christ should serve the Mussulmans for a mosque. At length all these crusades, after having been undertaken at different periods by the obstinacy of the Popes, and having lasted the space of two hundred years, ceased through the exhaustion of means and the impossibility of success, after having caused the slaughter of five or six millions of persons—a religious war altogether unprecedented in the annals of Pagan nations. There is room for astonishment, when, seeking the primitive and principal cause of such awful calamities, we find it to be in sacerdotal confession.

Victor III., elected pope in 1086, taught the court of Rome what power it might acquire by provoking princes and kings against one another. Supported by the Countess Matilda and Roger of Sicily, he excited a civil war, which brought

many woes upon Italy. He devised an enterprise against the Saracens of Africa, which may be considered as a crusade. That was, in a manner of speaking, the signal of the crusades, which, as we have said, commenced under his successor, Urban II.

We should stray from our subject were we to undertake to speak of the numerous crusades raised by the popes against Pagans, Mahometans, princes, and nations, whether heretical or orthodox; or were we to enumerate the rebellions, civil wars, crimes, and woes, occasioned throughout Christendom by the terror of excommunications, or by the enticement of the indulgences granted to such as would fight against the enemies of Rome or contribute to defray the expenses of those wars. Never had a power at its disposal such easy means of raising armies and of providing for their support, and even of filling them with courage; for the popes could inspire them at pleasure with religious fanaticism, which rushes blindly into the jaws of death.

The policy of Rome, relatively to the subject before us, has long been acknowledged by enlightened men. This is Pasquier's opinion of it:—"Ever since the period of the crusades, the popes, entertaining private enmities against certain sovereign princes, whenever they would be revenged on them, excommunicated them, then declared

them heretics for want of absolution, and, after all this, often caused crusades to be trumpeted against them, as if they had been infidels, in order that other princes might arm and seize on their principalities and kingdoms, which occasions an infinity of dissension, disturbance, and partiality in our Christendom. Nay more, when the courtiers of Rome wanted, under false pretences, to amass an enormous amount of pence, they caused a crusade to be preached against the Turks; and, to excite everybody to go or contribute to this holy league, the popes sent into every province several persons charged with their indulgences, in order to distribute them more or less plentifully, according to the amount of the sum they intended to bestow for the expedition of such enterprises, as, in fact, it happened under Clement V.”*

The numerous sources of wealth which resulted from the practices of which we have just spoken, were insufficient to quench the insatiable thirst of the court of Rome. In the fourteenth century it invented an institution that was very lucrative: it was indebted for it to Boniface VIII., who initiated the secular games of ancient Rome, and believed himself to be the more justified in doing so, that he found an analogous institution among the Jews. But, before speaking of the papal jubilee, let us see what was that of the Jews and Romans.

* Recherches, l. v., ch. 21.

The jubilee among the Jews, which returned every fifty years, far from being a financial speculation, had been legally ordained in order to favour the poor, re-establish equality, abolish slavery, and prevent the rich from getting possession of all the lands. The secular games of the Romans, so named because they were celebrated once in every hundred years, bore no analogy to the jubilee of the Jews and that of the Christians, excepting that they were a religious institution established after the expulsion of the Tarquins; that in them they performed lustrations and sacrifices to the gods, together with processions, and that the people repaired in crowds to the temples of Apollo and Diana, just as they repair in the modern jubilee to the cathedrals of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The Romans, whose festivals were characterised by the concourse and hilarity of the people, celebrated their secular feasts with great solemnity. The senate and the orders of the state appeared there in the insignia of their dignity. They were accompanied by the people, dressed in white, crowned with flowers, and holding palms in their hands. The statues of the gods reclined upon beds of state, placed in the vestibule of the temples. It was from a religious sentiment, accompanied with the allurements of pleasure, that the Romans took part in their secular games. The

Christians used to run to the jubilee from a heedless notion of piety, accompanied with the hope of thus escaping the pains of hell. Among the former, all was joy and gladness. Choruses, composed of young boys and girls, chanted alternately hymns in honour of Apollo and Diana, composed by poets of the first rank; finally, this festival was accompanied with the games of the circus, the theatre, and the amphitheatre.

Of all the jubilees practised among different races of people that which is in use in the Kingdom of Laos, in Asia, bears the greatest analogy with the jubilee instituted by Papacy. However, it has this particular feature, that it returns every year, doubtless because the priests, who then distribute indulgences, have found this frequent return very advantageous to their interest. These priests, a race of monks named *Talapoins*, receive the offerings which the people present, in emulation of one another, on visiting the temple in which stands the statue of their god Xaca. The Mexicans had also a celebrated jubilee, once in four years. They believed they received the remission of all their sins by attending it.

It would be long to relate here the ceremonies practised in the jubilee instituted by Boniface VIII. But what gave it a prodigious vogue, was the plenary indulgence granted to every person who would go to Rome and visit the churches of

Saint Peter and Saint Paul, after confessing his sins. We ought not, however, to omit the somewhat fantastical ceremony which takes place before the opening of the jubilee. It consists in breaking down and destroying a walled-up door, lateral with the grand portico of Saint Peter's Church. The pope, surrounded by his cardinals, bishops, and clergy, repairs, in his pontifical robes, to the portico of Saint Peter's, and after having chanted the *Veni Creator*, he strikes, with a golden hammer, the holy door three several times, saying, "*Aperite mihi portas justitiæ*," "open me the gates of justice." The clergy reply, "This is the gate of the Eternal; and the righteous shall enter." Then the masons set to work, and demolish the wall which obstructs the entrance; the door is then washed with consecrated water; the pope kneels on the threshold, and then enters the church, where he strikes up the *Te Deum*.

Another practice, no less remarkable, is for the people to ascend on their knees what they denominate the *scala santa*, or holy ladder. It is a staircase formed of twenty-eight steps of white marble, situated upon Mount Capitoline, at the summit of which is a chapel. They say—to those who will listen to them—that these are the identical steps by which Jesus Christ ascended to go to Pilate's house. This mode of ascent is painful, especially to the infirm; but the *jubilaires* submit to it, for

the sake of the new mercies which it affords them. It is practised on ordinary occasions, as we ourselves have witnessed several times.

The periods, forms, and practices of the jubilee have undergone some variation since the time of Benedict. This pope had fixed the celebration to return every hundred years. Sextus IV. and Paul, appointed it for every twenty-five years; but every pope grants, in addition, a jubilee in the year of his exaltation: so that we may calculate upon five or six jubilees in the space of twenty-five years. At those periods the city of Rome witnesses an immense distribution or sale of objects consecrated by the pope, or other things to which is attached some virtue, either compensative or preservative from sin, such as chapelets, medals, images, relics, agnuses, scapularies, *diciplines*, &c., with which all the shops of the *Strada delle Corone*, or street of chapelets, are abundantly provided. But the old illusion has generally faded away, and the same merit is no longer attached to all these things; nay, the jubilee itself is considered by many persons only as a festival for the satisfaction of curiosity and for amusement.

The year of the jubilee being come, the pope, after having solemnly officiated in Saint Peter's, chants an ancient hymn, beginning with these words: "*Cum jucunditate exibitis*"—"You shall go out with joy." Immediately, all present rush

out precipitately through the sacred door. The pope afterwards blesses the stones and mortar which are to serve for walling up the door, and the masons do the rest, after he has laid the first stone. The pilgrims return home, but only after they have received the entire remission of their sins, through the virtue of a long wand with which the penitentiaries give them a blow.

The reader may form an idea of the considerable concourse of strangers attracted to Rome, in the course of one year, by the enticement of a plenary indulgence for every crime, by reading what Muratori relates on this head, and the prodigious sums which it brought to the pope and the city of Rome. Giovanni Villani relates in his history, that not a single day passed in the course of that year that there were not in Rome, besides the inhabitants of that city, two hundred thousand pilgrims: "*Dugento mila di pellegrini.*" He adds further: "The offerings of the pilgrims procured the Church great riches, and all the Romans grew rich by the sale of their produce."* Other historians bear witness that the offerings of the faithful brought in enormous sums to Pope Boniface. This is likewise related by Guglielmo Ventura d'Asti, who

* E dell' offerta fatta per li pellegrini molto tesoro ne crebbe alla chiesa, e Romani per le loro derrate furono tutti ricchi.

had gone to Rome from devotion. "Leaving Rome," says he, "on the eve of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, I saw an immense multitude, which it was impossible to count: the Romans supposed it might amount to two hundred thousand persons, male and female. I then saw men and women trodden under foot by one another; and I myself incurred the same danger several times. The pope received from these persons incalculable sums; for there were two priests, night and day, standing beside the altar of Saint Peter's, and furnished with rakes, gathering up enormous quantities of money."* Such were the benefits which the policy of the court of Rome managed to derive from sacerdotal confession and indulgences.

* *Exiens de Roma in vigilia Nativitatis Christi, vidi turbam magnam, quam dinumerare nemo poterat. Et fama erat inter Romanos, quod ibi fuerunt viginti centum millia virorum et mulierum. Plures ego vidi ibi tam viros quam mulieres, conculcatos sub pedibus aliorum, et etiam egomet in eodem periculo plures vices evasi. Papa innumerabilem pecuniam ab eisdem recepit, quia die ac nocte duo cleri astabant ab altare Sancti-Petri, tenentes in eorum manibus rastellos, rastellantes pecuniam infinitam.*—(Murat., *Antiq. Ital.*, disc. lxxviii., col. 764.)

CHAPTER III.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONFESSORS UPON THE
MINDS OF KINGS.

THE changes and innovations introduced into Christianity have constantly had for their aim to increase the riches and dominion of the clergy, especially those of papacy. The court of Rome strove for a long time, before it could render auricular confession obligatory. But at length it succeeded, by giving it a sacramental character in a decree of the Council of Latran, foreseeing that, being thus constituted, it would be the strongest prop of its power. Indeed, it was by means of sacramental confession that it gave new force to its excommunications, established the inquisition, formed crusades against heretics and infidels, raised up subjects against their kings, and mutually enslaved them by each other's means; it was by

seizing with one hand the keys of heaven, and presenting with the other the remission of sins which affords the entrance or excommunication which banishes for ever. Thus was formed this colossal power, which has swayed the Christian world for so many centuries. After being attacked energetically by the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and by the philosophy of the eighteenth, it would be scarcely in existence at the present day, had it not been preserved by the policy of a few governments, which, thinking they have no longer any reason to dread it, have considered it as a useful instrument to maintain the despotism which they are unwilling to forego. For some it has been a safe port wherein the passions and anti-Christian vices might find shelter from remorse which otherwise would have troubled the conscience and inspired it with the dread of celestial vengeance; for others it was only a phantom, fit to overawe the multitude.

Accordingly, we have seen princes who, through fanaticism or a policy as contrary to natural as to divine law, have inflicted punishments upon those who refused to go to the confessional; whereas other princes elsewhere, as was the case in the sixteenth century, caused priests and laymen to be hanged, the former for having heard confession, and the latter for having uttered it: a striking proof of the iniquity of all those coercive laws

which prejudice, fanaticism, or an odious policy emits according to times, places, or circumstances. This kind of inquisitorial tyranny dates from the period of Theodosius, when emperors, self-styled Catholic, introduced laws against sin into civil constitutions to consolidate their despotism. They imported into their civil administration the canon law, an absurd jurisprudence, grounded upon acts and decisions falsely attributed to the apostles; a system of deception unknown among the ancients.

The Pagan religion was seldom an instrument of policy influencing all the actions of life. It was satisfied with making the oracles or soothsayers speak, when there was any question of enticing the people into determinations or enterprises which the heads of the government believed useful to the state; but no punishment was inflicted on such as put no faith in those government measures. Thus, the general who cast into the sea the chickens which would not give a good omen of the war he was about to undertake, was not punished, notwithstanding the defeat he suffered on that occasion.

Do we not know the active part which confession, the dread of the refusal of absolution, and the horror of excommunication, took in the bloody disputes of the empire with the court of Rome, in the factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Italy, in those of the league in France, in the

massacres of Saint Bartholomew, or in the religious riots in England, Ireland, Germany, &c.; or how the priests, in those deplorable periods, granted or refused absolution, according as people belonged or were opposed to the party or faction which they themselves had embraced? Lastly, do we not know that it has become, in our own time, as active and fructifying a power as it ever was? By what enchantment have those populous convents been produced which now swarm in France—those riches which the clergy have accumulated in so short a time; those little seminaries, those primary and secondary schools of both sexes, which are invading public instruction; those establishments, those funded properties, and those donations which have passed, as if by magic, from the hands of the laity into those of the secular and regular clergy?

But among the political evils resulting from auricular confession, we must put in the foremost rank the fatal influence it has had upon the minds and consciences of kings. If this institution had not a radical vice in itself, it might, perhaps, have been useful to bring into the paths of virtue and true religion the rulers of the destinies of nations. But experience shows that it has never attained that end, or at least only in a very slight manner, as is proved by the conduct of the kings who most frequently had recourse to the counsels of their

confessors. This had been remarked by Erasmus, when, after having spoken of the flatterers who surround kings, he adds these words: "For this evil there is a divine remedy, which, however, produces no effect—we mean those who are vulgarly called confessors of kings. If those men were endued with integrity and prudence, they might give to princes, both secretly and freely, paternal advice."*

The title of kingly confessor was unknown in the time of Charlemagne, and even during the reigns of several of his successors; for kings did not then confess, and their subjects imitated generally their example. This practice was confined to the convents. We find, however, that this palatial function existed in 947. Later, that is to say, at the period when confession had become sacramental, kings had titled confessors. But, as it would have been disagreeable to them to apply to the curate of their parish, conformably to the prescription of the Church, the popes, ever ready to grant favours to power, exempted kings from

* *Superat una sacra anchora quæ et ipsa sæpe fallit. Nimirum ii quos vulgus confessores regios vocat. Ii si integri forent ac prudentes, certe in illo altissimo secreto passent amanter ac libere monere principem. Verum plerumque fit ut dum suis quisque commodis studet, publicæ utilitatis rationem negligat.*—(Erasm., *Instit. princip. de adolat vitand.*, c. 2.)

this constraint. Philip the Fair is the first who obtained this dispensation. Still later, that is to say, in 1498, the priests or bishops who were charged with the direction of the consciences of kings, received the name of *auricular* confessors.

This duty having become important from the influence, credit, and power of those who performed it, was coveted equally by the secular and regular clergy; but the latter obtained exclusive possession of the post. The Benedictins were the first; then came the Franciscans and other mendicant friars, who were succeeded by the Dominicans; lastly, the Jesuits, more artful and under the interested protection of the popes, supplanted all their rivals, and remained masters of the field down to the period of their destruction.

Louis XI. had for preceptor and confessor a priest named *Jean Major*, who made his pupil a wicked king and a malicious devotee. This king died, as is always the case with such people, in sentiments of a tardy repentance, leaving behind him the evil he had done and the scandal he had occasioned.

Charles IX. terminated his sanguinary reign in the hands of a certain Armand Sorbie, bishop of Nevers, who comforted his conscience touching the Saint Bartholomew massacres, as Pope Gregory XIII. had already done. This same bishop is the man who had encouraged the Catholics to exter-

minate the Protestants, and considered Henri III. had acted meritoriously in putting himself at their head for the same purpose. This king had Father Matthieu, a Jesuit, for his confessor, who allowed him to indulge quietly in the most scandalous debauchery, and kept him to the practice of the most superstitious devotion.

He had afterwards another confessor, named *Jacques Colomb*, who confessed him, and gave him the communion six or seven days after he had caused the Duke de Guise and his brother, the cardinal, to be assassinated. The same confessor, who had justified him in his criminal conduct, armed against him Jacques Clément, a Dominican, who, dagger in hand, put an end to his debauchery and his life. Such are the benefits of a confession so much vaunted by politicians, and which is considered by some kings as the safeguard of their thrones. If these instances be not sufficient, we might mention the service it did Henri IV. and Louis XV.

“All who are acquainted with history,” says Dulaure, “are convinced that the confessors of the court served Cardinal Richelieu not only as spies, but that they were the instruments most commonly employed by that cardinal to direct the opinions of eminent persons.” Since Henri IV., the Jesuits had had the direction of royal consciences in their possession. An author of the

age of Louis XIII. thinks it very proper that this monarch should have Jesuits for spies; but he declares he ought not to entrust them with his secrets.

“Sire,” says he, “the public earnestly wish that your Majesty would, in this matter, be pleased to imitate the *wisdom* of the popes and the *prudence* of the kings of Spain, who certainly make use of these good fathers *as spies*, in order to discover, by their interference, the secrets of others; but they take good care not to declare their own to them, in order not to be dependent on them, or to enable them to play double. For this reason, no Jesuit hitherto has had the honour of confessing their majesties, or the infants and infantas.... Your majesty ought to take example from this, sire, and consider the inconveniences into which France has fallen, and into which your majesty may likewise fall, by making the confessions of the Louvre hereditary in the family of the Jesuits, as is the empire in the house of Austria.”*

But let us see what it produced during the reign of the great king (Louis XIV.), for the glory of his throne, the happiness of his subjects, and the prosperity of his states. The prince, who, thanks to his confessors, knew how to ally devotion with libertinism and policy, related to

* La Voix Publique au Roi, 1624, p. 22.

one of his mistresses how much his confessor had calmed his conscience, which had been alarmed at the oppression and pillage of his people, by assuring him that he was the master of all that his subjects possessed. How can we be surprised afterwards, if the despot, in the intoxication of his omnipotence, should exclaim with assurance: "*The state is myself!*" Had not the Sorbonne, in order to humour him, classed in the catalogue of mortal sins, any diminution, however trifling it might be, of the exorbitant taxes imposed upon the people, to pay mistresses, courtiers, favourites, and an army raised at great expense to increase the glory, power, and dominions of this most Catholic king?

What are we to think of the religion of a king who deprives the clergy of France of what he had granted them, being directed entirely by his own interests and deceitful policy? Thus, after having erected into a law of the state the declaration of the French clergy in 1686, he wrote as follows to Pope Innocent XII., in order to give more power to the party opposed to the Protestants: "I have issued the necessary orders that the things contained in my edict of the 2nd of March, 1686, concerning the declaration made by the French clergy, to which I had been obliged by past emergencies, be not put in force." It was Father Lachaise, the king's confessor, who provoked a

decision so favourable to the court of Rome. This Jesuit, devoted body and soul to papacy, intrigued with Madame de Maintenon and Louvois, and managed to get the revocation of the edict of Nantz; a revocation as fatal to France as favourable to the power of the court of Rome. This confessor, so clever in promoting the interests of that court, knew equally well how to reconcile devotion with the libertinism of his penitent.

It was a subject of opprobrium to the citizens, to see the palace of kings frequented by mistresses, who appeared amid the priests, even in the place where their august lover came to make a pompous display of his piety. But, no matter; the absolution of Father Lachaise authorized this spectacle: adultery received the homage of the court, and the confessor showed himself humbly in public—riding in his carriage drawn by six horses.

Le Tellier, another Jesuit, succeeded Father Lachaise, but, as according to canonical rules, he was unable to fulfil this office, it was granted him, though with regret, by Cardinal de Noailles, who knew what the man was capable of; but a king is never refused anything. This is what the cardinal wrote on the matter to Madame de Maintenon: “I give new powers to Father Le Tellier, though he is the person who least deserves to have them. It is a sacrifice I make to the king, and I leave it

to his conscience, continually praying our Lord to make him aware of the risk he runs in entrusting his soul to a man of that character.”* The cardinal was not mistaken. Hardly had Father Le Tellier entered upon his duties, when Louis XIV. consulted him about an augmentation of the taxes he intended to raise from the people; the confessor handed him, a few days afterwards, the result of a consultation of several doctors of the Sorbonne, stating that all the goods of subjects belong to the king, and that he does but dispose of what is his own.

We may judge from the extract of a letter written by Fenelon to Louis XIV., in what manner the titled confessors of kings performed their duties, and how far these men are serviceable in leading them to virtue and making them good princes: “As to your confessor,” said Fenelon, “he is not vicious, but he is afraid of solid virtue, and likes only profane and immoral persons; he is jealous of his authority, which you have extended beyond all bounds. Never have the confessors of kings created bishops by their single authority and decided concerning all the affairs of conscience. You are the only person in France, sire, who is ignorant that he knows nothing; that his mind is narrow and coarse; and that he possesses some

* Lettres de Madame de Maintenon, t. iv.

artifice notwithstanding this coarseness of his mind: the Jesuits despise him, and are indignant to see him so easily influenced to serve the ridiculous ambition of his family. You have made a monk a minister of state, who knows no more about men than he does about things, and who is the dupe of all those who flatter him and make him small presents. He neither doubts nor hesitates about any difficult question: another, very clever and very enlightened, would not dare to decide alone; but for his part, he is afraid only of having to deliberate with people associated with rules. He pushes boldly forward on all occasions without fearing to lead you astray; he will always be inclined to dissoluteness, and to keep you in ignorance, at all events; he will incline towards parties who conform to rules only when afraid of shocking you; thus, it is one blind man leading another, and, as Jesus Christ says, ‘they will both fall into the ditch.’ ”*

The next passage we are about to quote from the pious and conscientious Fenelon, clearly demonstrates that confessors, instead of reminding kings of their duties, are incessantly leading them astray by interest, baseness, vile adulation, or weakness. The language which this worthy priest addressed to kings ought to be that of all

* Œuvres Philosophiques de d’Alembert, t. viii., p. 51.

truly religious confessors, when the princes of the earth come to kneel before them: "Have you done justice," says Fénelon, "to the merit of all the principal subjects whom you can put in government places? By reckoning virtue and talent as nothing in choosing men, you have done the state irreparable wrong. Is it not from these very corrupt motives that you have filled the principal posts with weak and depraved men, and kept aloof from you every one who was well qualified to aid you in public business? To take away the lands and money of others is not an injustice comparable to that which I have just explained."

"What is certain is, that you have promised conditions to this your people: it is your duty to maintain them inviolably. Who could even trust you were you to fail in this? What would be sacred if so solemn a promise be not so? It is a contract entered into with the people to make them your subjects. Would you set about undermining the basis of your title? They owe you obedience only according to this contract: and, should you violate it, you will no longer be deserving of their obedience."*

If we pass on to the grandson of Louis XIV., we find the same sacrilegious abuse of confession,

* Fénelon, *Direction pour la conscience des rois*, or *Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la royauté*.

on the part of the confessor, and on that of the royal penitent. "Louis XV. took for his confessor Silvain Perusseau; for etiquette and imposture then so prescribed, even to the most dissolute kings. It was the same priest who confessed this king in the serious illness he suffered at Metz. The patient, having recovered, resumed the course of his debaucheries with the three sisters Châteauroux, and such mistresses as La Mailly and others, who had also their confessors. La Pompadour, La Romance, La Dubary, and the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*, were kept in a style of boundless debauchery, calculated to satisfy the lubricity of the devout prince, to scandalise Europe, and corrupt the morals of the people. A second repentance, at the period of his approaching death, in 1774, as meritorious in the eyes of God as the former, gained him an absolution from his confessor, and opened for him the gates of heaven."

This most Christian King was not less zealous for the salvation of his subjects than for his own. He had, in consequence, allowed confessors to his establishments of luxury and pleasure, even down to his dog-kennels. The confessor of the *chenil-neuf* figured in the almanack of Versailles. We do not find, however, him of the *Parc-aux-cerfs*.

Louis XVI., after withdrawing his confidence from the curate Poupart, gave it to Father Lenfant; and this choice contributed not a little to

his melancholy end ; for it is known that the instigations of this Jesuit had much to do with the opposition which this prince made to the revolution. If, instead of encouraging him in that fatal course, by absolving him from his oaths, every time he took one, he had given him counsels dictated by religion and prudence, he would very probably have rejected those which he received from a blind and corrupted court, and would not have allowed himself to be seduced by the encouragement and hopes held out by the enemies of liberty, both at home and abroad. Have we not seen among us within these few years, the princes of the Restoration abandoning themselves to the counsels of their apparent or real confessors ? Was not Louis XVIII. influenced by the Archbishop of Paris, and did not the Abbé De Latile contribute to the *coup d'état* which has snatched the crown of France away for ever from the eldest branch of the Bourbons ?

Confessors have not extended their disastrous influence upon France alone ; their counsels have been more or less fatal to Spain, Portugal, Italy, and England. We may attribute to them, in a great measure, the superstition, ignorance, and degradation of these first three nations, as well as the system of despotism which, for three hundred years, has enslaved the finest countries in Europe. It was this that gave a boundless authority to the

terrible and bloody tribunal of the Inquisition, which has spread its fatal influence beyond the seas, over the whole surface of South America, and over the other possessions of Spain and Portugal.

If you would know the effects of confession, travel through Switzerland; compare the localities where it prevails with those that have rejected it, and you will then be able to judge what are the services for which they are indebted to it. Austria, compared to Russia, will show you the same phenomenon, diversely modified by circumstances. Would it be a rash presumption to think that confession had much to do with the bloody contests which have just taken place in Switzerland, on account of the presence of that papal militia, ever ready to sow hatred and discord? Lastly, in England, confession has been one of the principal causes of the intolerance and religious dissensions which have so long agitated the three kingdoms. In short, this it was that caused James II. to lose his crown. "All judicious persons of the Catholic communion," says Hume, "were disgusted with the violent measures, and could easily foresee the consequences. But James was entirely governed by the rash counsels of the queen and his confessor, Father Peters, a Jesuit, whom he soon afterwards created a privy councillor."*

* Hume, History of England, anno 1686.

How can a prince help blindly obeying the priest at whose feet he lays every day the pomp and pride of the throne, or how avoid submitting to the prescriptions and counsels of one who, more potent than the angels, is able, by pronouncing a single word, to procure him the kingdom of heaven, when death must deprive him of what he possesses upon the earth?*

Let us conclude what concerns the higher order of policy by a passage taken from the work of a bishop, who has demonstrated by facts the disastrous influence which has been exercised at all times by confessors who have directed the consciences of kings, or those of the men to whom is intrusted the management of public affairs.

“Political sins,” says he, “or rather, such multiplied crimes, for the most part very serious, are seldom submitted to the tribunal of penitence, and still more seldom atoned for. A prepossession, sprung from ignorance and dishonesty, seems to consider them as if placed beyond the circle of morality. The period is not remote when great dignitaries were heard to say; one, ‘*I never brought my conscience to public affairs;*’ and another, ‘*Yes, it is injustice; but is it with justice that men are governed?*’

* *Quantus honor sacerdoti debetur, ad cujus genua et pedes diadema et purpura, si exolvi vinculis velint, accedere debent. Sacerdos omnes nodos, etiam angelis inenodabiles exolvit, verbo absolvo.*—(Cæsalius, de Veter. Christ ritibus.)

Wretches! where did you place your consciences? and with what did you govern? We know but too well."

These avowals remind us of the anecdote related by the canon Joly. "One day, at Notre-Dame de Paris, the keeper of the seals, clad in his magnificent robe, presented himself, in the Chapel of the Virgin, at the communion table. Another magistrate said to his neighbour, 'Do you see that keeper of the seals in his fine dress taking the communion, in presence of everybody? On leaving this place, he will, perhaps, go and sign edicts to ruin five or six persons.'"*

We have just spoken of the influence of confessors upon the minds of kings, and ever to the misfortune of the people. It would be easy to follow up this article with a chapter to prove that the influence upon the minds of nations has not been less fatal to the kings themselves than to public tranquillity, of which the history of every age furnishes us with abundant proofs. For fear of extending this subject beyond our limits, we shall confine ourselves to the quotation of a single example which has produced such disastrous effects during a long series of years. We mean the miserable times of the league, in which confessors

* Grégoire, *Histoire des Confesseurs des Empereurs, des rois*, ch. v., p. 61.

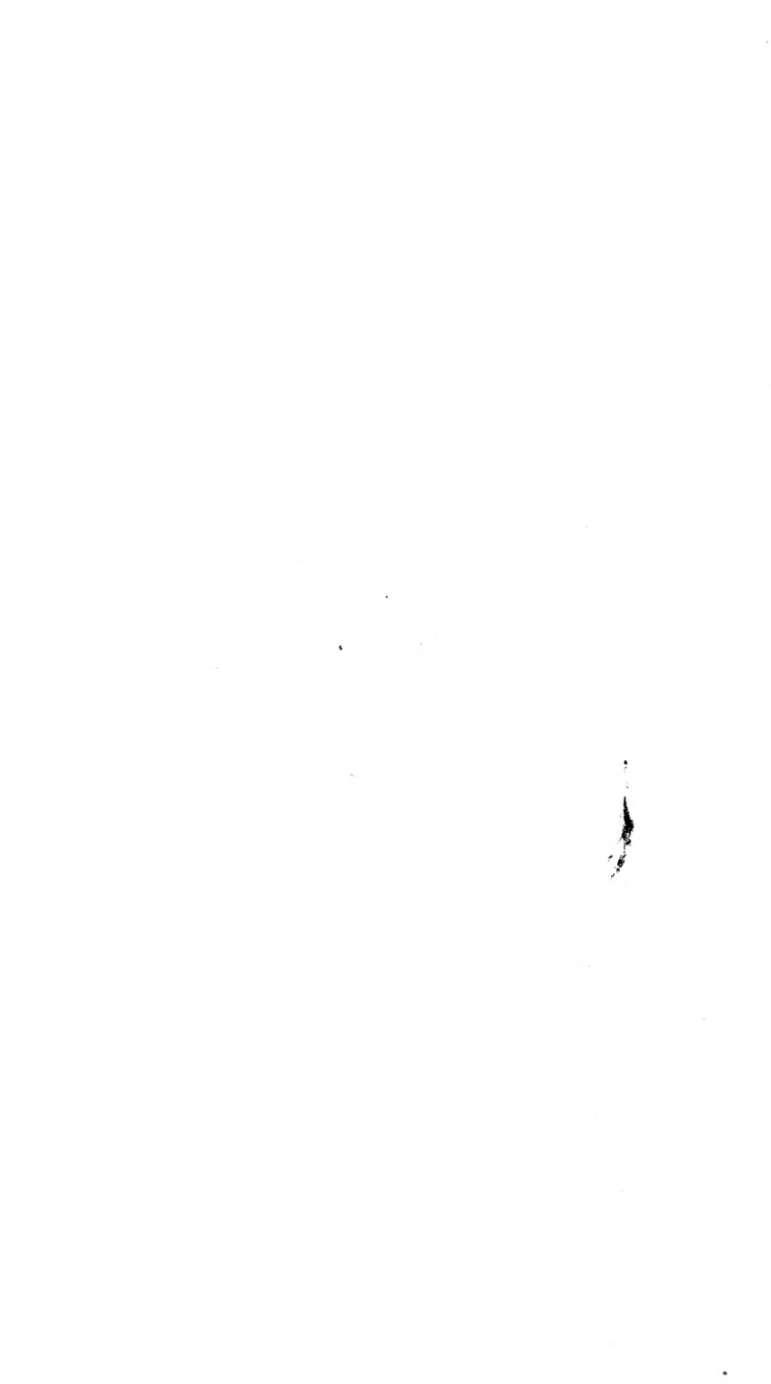
took a very active part and possessed much influence. The authors of that faction, encouraged by the court of Rome and that of Spain, found a powerful means of acquiring partisans among credulous or fanatical people, by means of confession. It is always easy to seduce the ignorant multitude when they are addressed in the name of God. Thus it was they dragged them into rebellion, by secretly inculcating opinions which it would have been dangerous to profess in the public pulpit. "They who worked the most efficaciously to cause rebellion," says *De Thou*, "were the confessors, who developed, in the ears of their penitents, whatever the preachers durst not plainly set forth in public; for in their pulpits, they refrained from naming persons, fearing they might be punished. The confessors, making an abuse of the secrecy of their ministry, spared neither the king, the ministers, nor the persons most attached to him; and, instead of consoling by pious words those who applied to them, they filled their minds with false reports, and put their consciences to the torture by embarrassing questions, and a thousand scruples. By the same means, they searched into the secrets of families; they maintained that subjects might form associations without the permission of the prince; they dragged them into that fatal league; and they refused absolution to such as would not enter."

"Complaints were laid," adds *M. de Thou*,

“against these seditious confessions; they were commanded not thus to abuse the sanctity of their ministry; they did not alter their course, but were only more circumspect, and laid down this new dogma: ‘That the penitent who betrays what the confessor has told him is as guilty as the confessor who reveals the confession of his penitent.’”*

* De Thou, Hist., liv 86.

BOOK IV.



DIFFERENT ABUSES, IRREGULARITIES, ERRORS, AND PREJUDICES, INHERENT IN AURICULAR CONFESSION.

CHAPTER I.

VICES, IRREGULARITIES, AND ABUSES OF CONFESSION.

THE system of sacerdotal confession, so contrary to natural law and that of the Gospel, has necessarily given rise to irregularities, inconsistencies, and numerous abuses. One of the most serious of these inconveniences, and which best demonstrates the inutility of confession, is the confident perseverance with which a great number of Roman Catholics pass their lives in alternately sinning and getting absolution; and what is not less deplorable is, that absolution or the remission

of sins has been granted or refused, according to the passions, party spirit, ignorance, opinions, prejudices, or the character of the confessors. Thus, what, in the opinion of one priest, might be an unpardonable crime, has been found to be an indifferent or even a meritorious action, according to another, in different circumstances. This is a criminal abuse, which one council bitterly complained of. "As we have heard," says the second Council of Toledo, "that there are in some churches of Spain men who, every time it pleases them to sin, do penance, not according to the prescriptions of the canons, but in the most shameful manner, and that each time they ask the priest to reconcile them; it is to put a stop to such execrable presumption that," &c.* "This conversion," says the same council, "gives not life, but death; it is the triumph of the devil."† Such was the doctrine of the whole primitive church.

Thus it is that people generally believe that, to obtain the remission of sins, it is sufficient to make

* Quoniam comperivimus per quasdam Hispaniarum Ecclesias, non secundum canonum, sed fœdissime, pro suis peccatis homines agere pœnitentiam et quotiescumque peccare libuerit, toties a presbytero se reconciliari expostulent et ideo ad coercendum tam execrabilem præsumptionem.—(Concil. ii., Toletan.)

† Hœc conversio non est ad vitam, sed ad mortem; ut gloriatur diabolus per eam.—(Id., *ibid.*)

an avowal of them to a priest, to say their *confiteor*, and perform some slight penance, which consists in reciting a few *paters*, or psalms. This easy mode of unburthening their consciences, by presenting themselves more or less frequently at the feet of a priest, far from contributing to a change of life, maintains the greater part of men in their habitual irregularities. Indeed, how many persons do we not see go regularly to the confessional, who nevertheless continue to lead a licentious life, violating the most imperious precepts of the Gospel; but all these crimes are pardoned by the virtual effect of three words. People trust to their absolution, which they are sure to obtain.

Nay, many do not fear to sin and to leave their passions unbridled, indulging in the hope that at a certain age, or at the point of death, they will receive an absolution, which will shelter them from eternal damnation. They present themselves at the confessional, receive absolution, and take the communion, because it is a custom to which everybody submits, or because nobody can escape it without incurring blame, calumny, and reprobation, and often the persecution and hatred of the superstitious and fanatical. Thus it is that consciences are perverted, and people are made sacrilegious or hypocrites. Therefore confession, so far from improving moral and religious sentiments, corrupts and perverts them.

The earlier Christians admitted nobody to the communion of the faithful till after they felt convinced, from his long and severe penance, that he had really improved. But, since auricular confession has been instituted, not only is absolution given before the ordeal is made by penance, but this penance is in such disproportion with the magnitude of the sins, that passion has ever more empire and influence over the mind than a punishment easy to support.

The councils say—or, what is still better, reason says—that the remission of sins, that is to say, sacerdotal absolution, the *ego te absolvo* ought not to be pronounced till after the reparation or the fulfilment of the penance imposed by the priest. This absolution would be, in the contrary case, the act of a judge, who, inflicting a punishment on a criminal, would leave him at liberty to undergo or not this punishment. This right of judging and punishing would then become a mere illusion. It would be like a creditor giving a receipt to his debtor before the latter had settled his debt. It was accordingly to prevent this fatal irregularity, and the infractions of the penitential conditions, that the councils formally condemned it. Fleury shows the vices of this practice, so antichristian and even immoral from its results, when he speaks of its being introduced into the Church. “There was then no longer any ques-

tion of being convinced by lasting ordeals of the conversion of the heart, which was the end and aim of the canonical penance.....The unconverted sinner would not render himself fit to render satisfaction when he had obtained by absolution all he desired.....At the same time they introduced the custom of giving absolution, even in secret penance, immediately after confession, and satisfaction imposed and accepted; whereas, in old times, it was given only at the end or at least after a great part of the penance had been performed.”*

It was the great interest which the Church of Rome and the clergy had in getting auricular confession adopted, that rendered general the use of spontaneous absolutions: they felt convinced that sinners would submit to it the more easily, that in receiving the pardon of their faults, immediately after declaring them, they would believe themselves to be delivered from the punishments of hell, and thus accept with pleasure rather than repugnance the new yoke imposed upon them.

But what is very surprising is, that, whilst they are so indulgent, when there is any question of imposing a penance and giving absolution to powerful men, to princes who have existed only to be a curse to several millions of individuals, they

* Fleury, 4^me discoursur l’Hist. Ecclés., n. 15.

refused it even till 1396,* to persons condemned to death for a single fault which even only slightly injured one person; and, in our time, they still refuse in the same case to allow them to participate in the blood of Jesus Christ, who died to save all mankind.

Ravaillac, led to execution in 1610, having asked his confessor for absolution, the latter refused, saying: "that this was forbidden for crimes of high treason, if he did not reveal his accomplices." Ravaillac, who had told him he had none, asked him to give him a conditional absolution, which should be valid only in case what he had assured him was the truth; and the priest gave it him.†

If confession and communion be, as you affirm, sacraments to the participation of which eternal salvation is attached, and this participation can be effected only by your ministry, by what right did you refuse the one so long, and do you still refuse the other to wretches far less guilty before God than those men for whom you open all the treasures of heaven, merely because they possess all those of earth?

* An ordinance of King Charles VI., abolishing the custom that no province of this kingdom should give the sacrament of confession to persons condemned to death.—(*Hist. des Antiq. de Paris*, par Sauval, t. iii., p. 649.)

† *Mémoires de l'Etoile*, t. ii., p. 322.

Moreover, there are many occasions when they give absolution without looking so closely. Thus, there are often men who have never believed in confession or the commandments of the Church, and who, seeing their death approaching, manifest no desire of having recourse to a priest. But when they are in the agonies of death, without either knowledge or will, their relations or friends, from human respect, or decency, or on account of certain interests, or out of hypocrisy send for a priest. The latter, upon the testimony—almost always false—that the dying man, before losing his intellectual faculties, had shown symptoms of repentance, gives absolution; and the public, either devout or affecting to be so, rejoices at a soul, purified by this absolution, and secure of the happiness of partaking the repose of the celestial abode. The priest may even be convinced, that the person upon whom he is operating is incredulous, a philosopher, nay an atheist; no matter, he does his duty in obedience to the Council of Orange, which said: “He who suddenly becomes unconscious may receive penance or baptism, if other persons bear testimony to his previous will, or if he himself should indicate it by some sign. These sacraments and whatever things belong to piety may also be given to the insane.”* But things are

* Subito obmutescent, baptizari aut pœnitentiam accipere

carried still further at the present day, when material interests, the influence of certain opinions favoured by government, or the fear of shocking the prejudices of the moment, lead a great many persons, who do not even believe in Christianity, to request in their life time, that, after their death, all the outward forms of religion should be practised towards them, and this for the edification of the public: thus, in our customs, edification and hypocrisy have become synonymous.

As for madmen and idiots, they have gone from one deduction to another so far as to pretend, that the absolution which was practised upon them produced the same effect as if those persons had been in the enjoyment of all their intellectual faculties; for, said the infallible doctors of the Church: "As people are agreed to give baptism to those who are unconscious, and upon the faith of their parents, so also they who have received the gift of penitence, after having lost the use of their reason, ought to retain it and submit to it.*

potest, si voluntatis pœnitentiæ testimonium in aliorum verbis habet, aut præsentis in suo nutu, amentibus etiam quæcumque pietatis sunt, conferenda sunt.—(First Council of Orange, ch. 3.)

* *Sicut baptismum quod nescientibus parvulis sine ulla contentione in fide tantum proximorum accipitur, ita et pœnitentiæ donum quod nescientibus illabatur, absque ulla repugnantia, inviolabiliter, hi qui illud acceperint observabunt.*—(Concil. Toletan., xii., cap. 2.)

It is difficult to conceive a doctrine which applies essentially spiritual sacraments to inert bodies, deprived of every intellectual faculty, of reason and of will. Might not this manner of administering the sacrament be compared to a physician who, being called in to a dying man and arriving after he has breathed his last, should inject into his body remedies which can no longer have any effect? But we must not be surprised, since this doctrine has been so favourable to the power, riches, and splendour of the court of Rome.

The further we penetrate into the labyrinth of auricular confession the more we are bewildered. On one side you are told that absolution can be valid only after a verbal and circumstantial declaration of every sin; and, on the other, absolution is given to an army scattered over a plain, to a distance of several miles, where the priest can neither see, hear, nor be heard, to an army composed of several thousand men, who, the day before, violated and pillaged, and who, on the morrow, will massacre, burn, rob, and violate at discretion. These are facts which have incessantly occurred, especially during the period of the crusades. Here is an instance of them, the more remarkable that absolution of this kind was given by a pope. This pope, who was Urban II., came to France in 1091; he convoked a council

at Clermont, in which he fulminated a sentence of excommunication against Philip, who had already been excommunicated, the preceding year, in a council of French bishops, assembled at Autun. It was in the council of Clermont, at which the French and foreign princes attended, that he decreed, at the instigation of a fanatical monk, Peter the Hermit, a crusade against the Turks. Having repaired, with the members of the council, to a vast square filled with an immense crowd, he made them a speech to engage them to take the cross. "After this oration," says an historian, "a cardinal, named Ghirigorio, fell prostrate on the ground in the name of all, and recited the confession; all the people present beating their breasts, received the absolution of their sins, and afterwards benediction."* And all having shouted, "It is the will of God" (*Dieu le veut*), took the cross.

But who were the people who thus suddenly departed for the Crusades, and who, without saying a word, or ever thinking of the crimes with which their lives were polluted, received so speedily the absolution of them from him to

* Dato fine a questa aringa, uno de cardinali che aveva nome Ghirigorio prosternatosi in terra, in nomine di tutti, recitò la confessione e tutti, percotendosi il petto, ebbero l'assoluzione delle peccata, et dopo la benedizione.—(Guerra per i principi christiani contra i Saracini da il frate Roberto.)

whom Jesus Christ has intrusted the keys of paradise, when conferring on him the power of retaining and remitting? Saint Bernard himself, a great instigator of the Crusades, will inform us. "There was seen going on the Crusades a prodigious multitude of men, who, with the exception of a few, were mere wretches, impious or sacrilegious persons, ravishers of women, homicides, perjurers, and adulterers. Two advantages resulted from their departure, for such as had any connexion with them rejoiced at it, and they who expected some assistance from them in this enterprise experienced no less pleasure. The result was, that their absence was useful to those whom they oppressed, as well as to those to whose aid they were marching."*

It was in consequence of this opinion, so skillfully inculcated upon the minds of men and on which eternal salvation is made to depend, that the court of Rome used to dethrone kings, distribute empires, instigate the people to rebellion

* *Paucos admodum in tanta multitudine hominum illo confluere videas, nisi utique sceleratos et impios, raptos et sacrilegos, homicidas, perjuros, adulteros: de quorum profecto protectione sicut duplex quoddam constat provenire bonum, ita duplicatur et gaudium; quando quidem tam suos de suo discessu lætificant, quam illos de adventu quibus subvenire festinant. Prosunt quippe utrobique, non solum utique istos tuendo, sed etiam illos non opprimendo.—(Bernard, C. S. Sermo exhortat. ad milites templi.)*

against legitimate authority, and arm the former and the latter against those who refused to recognise its usurpations, or against the enemies that menaced its power. It was with the fascination of the words addressed by Jesus Christ to Saint Peter, "I will give you the kingdom of heaven;" that the popes have opened or shut, according to their will or their interests, the gates of heaven, and stirred, agitated, and subjugated the Christian world. It was by usurping the primitive rights of the faithful and the priesthood, that they reserved to themselves alone the power of absolving certain sins—a means of increasing their power and riches. Lastly, what has given them that empire over minds, which definitely governs that of material force, is that pretended divine right of granting or selling indulgences for the redemption of past, present, and even future sins, and of delivering sinful souls from the flames of purgatory. This belief had penetrated so deeply into minds, that many persons engaged in the disastrous wars of the Crusades preferred a certain death, to which their eternal salvation was attached, to returning into their own country, where a relapse into sin might lead them to hell. This is what we are informed by the *Abbé de Casemari*, in one of his letters: "They who returned from the Crusades," he says, "have avowed that they had seen several persons menaced with death,

who said they would rather die than return thither, lest they should relapse into sin.”* What opinion is more calculated to bewilder the mind of man, to fanaticize and degrade it, than that which tends to persuade him that, should he fall in any enterprise, any unjust or criminal war, he is secure, whatever be the enormity of his sins, and that, being supplied with the sacerdotal pardon, he will obtain that of God! Is not this the doctrine of the Koran and the holy war preached by the *Moullas* of Islamism? Or, if they will, that which Luther attributed to certain monks, when he said: “The wretches! they believe that indulgence is powerful enough to save the greatest sinner, even one who might have violated the Holy Mother of our Saviour!”

There is another contradiction presented by auricular and sacerdotal confession. What becomes of absolution—what effect can it have, in the case in which an incredulous priest, which has happened more than once, despising the sacrament, feigns to give absolution, and does not pronounce the indispensable sacramental words? Doubtless, this absolution is not valid, and, consequently, can produce no effect. Yet, as it is indispensable, the

* Denique confessi sunt nobis qui redibant, quod vidissent multos ibi morientes quilibentur se mori dicebant, neque velle reverti, ne amplius in peccata reciderent.—(Epistol. 333.)

penitent who does not receive it will be guilty before God and deserve a punishment. "But," say they, "the desire he has of giving satisfaction to the precept justifies him before God." This is very well; but does it not thence follow that God, showing mercy without the ministry of a priest, such ministry is useless in this case as it is in every other? It is true, theological doctors shift the difficulty by saying: "However unworthy the dispensers of this celestial gift may be, yet grace is effected by their ministry, even as it happened when God spoke to Balaam through the medium of his ass. Indeed, in this case, our unworthiness is no obstacle to grace."* The Donatists denied, with reason, the validity of sacraments administered by such as had no faith. If it were otherwise, the absolution of sins given by a Pagan, a Brahman, or a Mussulman, would be equally efficacious. Saint Thomas reasons still more falsely when he says: "Confession does not cease to be sacramental, though he who confesses be determined not to change his conduct."† This is al-

* *Nam quamvis indigui sunt qui divinorum donorum ministri sunt, et gratia operatur per eos, sicut et per asinam Balaam locutus est. Non enim indignitas nostra gratiam prohibet.*—(S. Chrysost., Hom. 85, in Joan.)

† *Confessio non desinit esse sacramentalis, quamvis ille qui confitetur emendationem non proponat.*—(S. Thomas, in quarta dist., 21.)

most like saying that the words "*I baptize thee*," pronounced by a Christian upon the head of a Pagan who might refuse to embrace the faith, would become sacramental, produce an effect, and make a man a Christian in spite of himself. Thus it is that the admission of a sacramental confession has brought along with it contradictory and indefensible opinions.

Lastly, another absurdity, resulting from the power of absolving or condemning sinners during life, has been to anathematise, and even to dis-anathematise them after their death. This barbarous practice, so contrary to charity, was introduced by the hatred and spirit of persecution which reigned among the numerous sects, from the very origin of Christianity. Gratian, after having quoted as examples Theodorus, Mopsuestus, Dioscorus, and Origen, excommunicated after their deaths, adds: "The holy synod has said: it has been sufficiently demonstrated, by all that has been related, as well as by the tradition of the Church, that the apostates and the heretics were anathematised after their death."* This anathema was pronounced in a Council of Africa against such bishops as bequeathed their wealth to here-

* Sancta synodus dixit: Sufficiunt quidem quæ dicta et probata sunt, ecclesiasticam traditionem demonstrare quod apostates, hæreticos et post mortem anathematisari.—(Grat., in decret. Causa xxiv., quæst.2.)

tics. "Several bishops of our province, assembled of yore to discuss different points of ecclesiastical discipline, decided that bishops who leave their wealth to heretics shall be subject to anathema after their death."*

Plutarch relates a fact which ought to cause *excommunicating* and *anathematising* priests to blush, who, unmindful of evangelical meekness and tolerance, pursue with their hatred and vengeance, even beyond the tomb, such as do not share their opinions and refuse to submit to their laws. A woman, a Pagan priestess, opposes the wish of the people who command her to anathematise their enemy, whereas the history of our religion displays a long series of anathemas against kings, nations, and individuals. "The priestess of Pallas was praised," says Plutarch, "although the people had commanded her: 'For I have,' replied she, 'the profession of priestess to pray for men, and not to curse them.'"[†]

But what is not less singular and absurd, is to make this power of retaining and remitting extend

* Anterioribus temporibus in nostra provincia, multi episcopi congregati, et quidem de diversis causis ad ecclesiasticum statum pertinentibus, disputantes, statuerunt de episcopis defunctis, qui hæreticis suas facultates relinquunt, ut post mortem anathemati subjiciantur.—(Concil. Afric., cap. xlviii., can. 80.)

† Plutarch, Roman Questions; quest. 44.

even into hell, and to use it for delivering those who have been condemned to inhabit that abode to all eternity. This is, however, what was done by papal power and infallibility in 1357. Pierre de Bourbon, having been excommunicated by the pope, and having died in this state of anathema, his son, believing that the pope had the power to deliver souls from hell, asked him to get him absolved, in order that he might cause prayers to be said for him, doubtless supposing that he would pass into purgatory. A French cardinal, being appointed commissioner by the pope, pronounced the following decree: "We recommend to each of you, and command that, in case the son of the deceased should keep the promise he has made, the soul of his father, after receiving absolution, shall be succoured by the prayers of the faithful."*

The book of proverbs had said. "*Universa delicta Operit Charitas*:" "Charity towards God and man remits every sin." The Gospel repeats, that he who possesses this charity has fulfilled all the law. Here are the observations of Origen, and the motives upon which he grounds his opinion: "You have heard how many sacrifices there are

* Vobis et cuilibet vestrum in solidum committimus et mandamus quatenus si est ita prædicto filio ad implere quod promittit, faciat animam ipsius patris defuncti, debita absolutione prævia fidelium adjuvari. Datum Avenion., anno 1357.

in the law for the remission of sins: learn now what are the ways in the Gospel of obtaining this remission. The first consists of baptism, the second of martyrdom, and the third of alms: for the Saviour has said, '*Give alms, and you shall be entirely purified.*' The fourth is: 'Our sins are forgiven us, because we forgive those of our brethren.' This is what our Lord and Saviour has said: '*If you heartily remit the sins of your brethren, your Father will also remit yours;*' for he has taught us to pray thus: '*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.*' The fifth manner of obtaining the remission of sins consists in withdrawing a sinner from his errors, and saving his soul from death. Thus it is we blot out a multitude of sins. The sixth is to be found in a boundless charity, as our Saviour himself says: '*Verily I say unto you, her sins are forgiven her, because she loved much.*' And the apostle has said: '*Charity covers a multitude of sins.*' There is, moreover, a seventh manner, though very difficult and painful, of obtaining the remission of sins: it is repentance—such repentance as when the sinner bathes his bed with tears, when they serve him for food night and day, and he does not blush to avow his sins to the priest of the Lord, and to demand a remedy."* Thus, love

* Audisti quanta sint in lege sacrificia pro peccatis, audi

towards God and towards our neighbour are, according to the belief of the primitive church, the essential conditions of the forgiveness of sins. Origen would not have omitted confession, had it been practised in his time.

Let us speak of the revelations of confession made by priests. The Church, in prescribing sacerdotal confession to Christians, enacted very severe punishments against such as revealed their confessions, in order to re-assure those who, through the dread of seeing certain acts of which they

nunc quantæ sint remissiones peccatorum in Evangeliiis. Est ista prima, qua baptizamur in remissione peccatorum. Secunda remissio est in passiona martyrii. Tertia est quæ pro eleemosyna datur. Dicit enim Salvator: *Verumtamen date eleemosynam, et ecce omnia munda sicut vobis.* Quarta nobis fit remissione peccatorum per hoc quod et nos remittimus peccata fratribus nostris. Sic enim dicit ipse Dominus et Salvator noster, quia *si dimiseritis fratribus vestris ex corde peccata ipsorum, et vobis remittet pater vester: et sicut in oratione non dicere docuit, remitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos remittimus debitoribus nostris.* Quinta remissio peccatorum est, quum converterit quis peccatorem ab errore vitæ suæ, salvat animam ejus a morte, et cooperit multitudinem peccatorum. Sexta quoque fit remissio per abundantiam charitatis, sicut et ipse Dominus dicit: *Amen dico, remittuntur ei peccata multa, quoniam dilexit multum.* Et apostolus dicit: Charitas cooperit multitudinem peccatorum. Est adhuc septima, licet dura et laboriosa, per pœnitentiam remissionem peccatorum, cum lavat peccator in lachrymis stratum suum, et fiunt ei lachrymæ panes die ac nocte, et cum non erubescit sacerdoti Domini indicare peccatum suum et quærere medicinum.—(Origenes, Hom. 2, in Levitic.)

might be guilty, noised abroad, might refuse to submit to this kind of tribunal. The Council of Latran, wishing that this confession, which it had promoted to a sacrament, should prevail, declared, "that a priest who reveals any confession sins more grievously than he who commits the sin."* Thus, according to this doctrine, which thus patronises a practice prescribed for the interests of the church, he who assassinates upon the highway is less guilty than he who denounces him.

Other theologians profess a still more frightful doctrine upon this subject: "A confession ought not to be revealed," say they, "even though the point in question be the salvation of the whole world, the preservation of the penitent himself or any other innocent person, the conflagration of the world, the destruction of the sacraments and that of religion, the life and preservation of Jesus Christ himself, if he returned upon the earth, or that of any prince or monarch."† It was with

* *Gravius peccat sacerdos qui peccatum revelat, quam homo qui peccatum committit.*—(Concil. Later., iv.)

† *Non si agatur totius orbis salus; non si ipsius pœnitentis, non si cujuscumque innocentis conservatio; non si totius orbis conflagratio; non si religionem et sacramentorum omnium perversio; non denique ipsius Christi in terra versantis, nedum ullius principis aut monarchæ vita atque incolumitas.*—(Henriq., *Sum Theolog.*, lib. vi., de Pœnit., c. 19, § 3.)

such execrable maxims as these, that they were able to place a poniard in the hands of fanatics, without fearing to compromise themselves.

But, in fact, all these fine declarations and prohibitions are observed only so far as they are useful to the interests of the Church; for a great number of facts may be cited, without reckoning those which, being done secretly, have not come to the knowledge of the public, in which secrecy has been violated by the order and with the approbation of the popes and councils. The former have published several bulls by which they order penitents to reveal to the bishops and inquisitors certain transgressions or crimes against the doctrine, laws, and decrees of the Roman Catholic Church; and they prescribe that absolution shall not be given till after this declaration has been made. But there is here, nevertheless, a violation of the secrecy of confession, and it is no less real, though it be made in an indirect manner. For, in this case, the priest is the true revealer, since the penitent would have revealed nothing, had he not been constrained by the refusal of absolution; a refusal which, in his estimation, is a condemnation to everlasting punishments in a future life. Boniface VIII., after having excommunicated Philip IV., ordered his confessor to go to Rome to give an account of the conduct of his penitent. In the councils which were held at the end of the thir-

teenth century, decrees were made by which confessors are commanded to reveal the name and sins of the priests, who, in the exercise of their ministry, may have violated the laws of decency; which decrees were confirmed in an assembly of the curates and vicars of Paris, held in 1503. Saint Foix quotes the following fact, related by Pierre Mattieu. "A nobleman of Normandy, having confessed to a Franciscan friar, and accused himself of having wished to kill Francis I., the Franciscan gave the prince notice of it, and the noble was condemned to be beheaded. This friar, who was probably rewarded for having violated the secrecy of confession, would, however, have deserved the same punishment; since, according to the principle of the Council of Latran, he was more guilty than he who had committed the crime.

I myself was nearly being a witness to a fact of the same nature in Spain, where I made a journey immediately after the peace, during the time of the Directory. A very short time before that period, a man, of the middle class, named Piccorneille, had conceived the project of establishing a republic in Spain. He had managed to acquire a great number of partisans among the people. He had formed a magazine of arms, and had intended, after he had seized on all the horses belonging to the numerous carriages which repair every evening to the public promenade, to have himself and his partisans con-

veyed to La Granja, a country house where the king was residing, and to make himself master of his person. Two days before the time appointed for the execution of this project, a watchmaker, who was in the conspiracy, having been to confess to a monk on the occasion of a festival, revealed to him all that was to happen. The monk, as may be easily imagined, hastened to make the revelation to the government. Piecorneille was arrested and sent to the Philippines; for they durst not try him and put him to death, lest a popular insurrection should break out.

It is a duty of monks to reveal to their superiors the facts and sins confided to them, whenever any benefit may accrue to the Catholic religion; and, in this case, the superiors send the information to the court of Rome, who know how to turn it to advantage. The monks do not scruple any the more to make this kind of declaration to government, when they think they may derive some advantage from it for themselves or their order. Nay, the secrets of families are not always safe from these revelations. Not only theologians, but likewise celebrated juriconsults, have maintained that a confessor is not guilty in revealing the crime of high treason. From all we have stated it follows, that confession is sometimes fatal to penitents, but always useful to the Church, and often to despotic governments.

Another inconvenience of auricular confession is, that penitents do not always confine themselves to a simple declaration of their own faults, but also expose those of their neighbour, and reveal things which ought never to transpire beyond the family circle. This is complained of by a theologian who has written upon this matter with a full knowledge of his subject, and who speaks of this kind of abuse in the following terms :—" Let penitents know that, in confession, they ought to declare only their own sins, and not those of others, as many are accustomed to do ; in accusing themselves of their own sins, they reveal several sins that are foreign to them : men, what relates to their wives ; wives, to their husbands ; servants, what concerns their masters ; masters, things relating to their servants ; and so on, one against the other."*

It is, however, a principle received among Catholic Casuists that, in certain circumstances, the sins of others may be revealed. " The honour of one's neighbour," says Nicole : " must be pro-

* *Intelligent pœnitentes, in confessione peccata propria manifestanda esse, non autem aliorum in quo abusus est multorum, ut enim aliquando detegant peccatum, simul multa impertinentia narrant peccata, vir uxoris, uxores virorum, domini servorum et servi dominorum, aliique denique aliorum.*—(S. Toletanus, *Instruct.*, Sacerdot. ad Pœnit, l. iii. c. 6. art. 3.)

tected as carefully as possible, unless it be necessary for some useful purpose, or for the integrity of confession, to reveal such as are guilty of the same crimes." *

Penitents are likewise instigated to these denunciations by the questions of wicked priests who, through curiosity or intrigue, meddle with the private affairs of families. This was especially the practice of the Jesuits, by means of which they increased their power and riches; it is, moreover, what they are employing at the present day to get back what they have lost.

This inquisitorial art of penetrating into the most intimate secrets of families, though perfected by the Jesuits, was not, however, their own invention. At all times, corrupt and intriguing priests have been found meddling in worldly affairs, under pretence of religion, in order to establish their dominion and to make themselves feared.

Scire volunt secreta domus, atque inde timeri.†

Saint Augustin speaks of denunciations made to the Church by women against their husbands. "There are men," says he, "who secretly commit adultery in their houses. Their wives denounce them to us sometimes through jealousy, at other

* Nicole, *De la Confession*.

† Petronius, 1, 4, 15.

times having in view their husbands' salvation." * The same father makes a public appeal to women, to apply, in such cases, to the Church. "Do not allow your husbands to indulge in fornication; protest to the Church against them." † Women have always been applied to as being inclined to reveal what they know, and to refuse nothing to those whom they look upon as the ministers of God. As much as they are withheld by modesty or shame from declaring to their confessors certain acts which concern themselves personally, so much are they inclined to reveal the intimate secrets of connexions, and even what ought to remain concealed under the sacred obligation of marriage.

There exists a propensity and a certain necessity, in devout women, to enter into long and circumstantial colloquies with their directors; which often gives rise to confidences and declarations that lead from mysticism to acts of sacrilege. This is what Gerson complained of, when he said: "Their confessions are colloquies mingled with profane things; would to God there were nothing criminal! Would to God that what seems to have

* *Sunt homines adulteri in domibus suis; in secreto peccant. Aliquando nobis producuntur ab uxoribus, plerumque zelantibus, aliquando maritorum salutem querentibus.*—(S. August., de Verb. Domin., serm. xvi., c. 8.)

† *Nolite viros vestros permitttere fornicare: interpellate contra illos Ecclesiam.*—(Id., Hom. 41, c. 4.)

begun in the spirit may not end in the flesh! May God prevent worse crimes!"* "We might say to unmarried priests what Saint Francis said to his monks, in alluding to the nuns of Saint Clair: "I fear, my brethren, that whilst God has deprived us of women, the devil has given us sisters."†

This intimate confidence, this development of the sentiments of the heart and of the deepest recesses of the conscience, often produces wishes, and gives birth to a passion the more easily aroused, as it finds, in men who profess celibacy, only this simple means of being kindled without *éclat*. This is what is proved by experience, and what is owned by the Casuists, whom long experience has initiated into these mysteries. Thus Escobar quotes, among the numerous facts of this kind which he says he had known, that of a confessor who had had an intimacy with three girls and their mother, after having seduced them at the tribunal of confession.‡

* Ad fabulationes vertunt confessiones suas, miscentes colloquia de profanis, utinam non de nefariis! utinam quæ de spiritu incepisse videntur, non commutent in carne! Prohibeat deteriora, Deus.—(Gerson., Trait., viii., part. 2.)

† Timeo, fratres, ne Deus abstulerit nobis mulieres et diabolus dederit sorores.

‡ Matrem et tres sorores virgines in actu sacramentali sollicitas et stupratas.—(Escobar, Tracta de Confess. solic. in exordio.)

CHAPTER II.

PREJUDICES, ERRORS, AND SUPERSTITION,
INHERENT IN CONFESSION.

SUPERSTITION, which appears inherent in human nature, since it has reigned in every age among all nations, is, however, only the result of ignorance and prejudices transmitted from age to age. The only remedy to be applied to this hereditary evil would have been civil and religious instruction. But, on the one hand, governments, either through their indifference for the people, or with the intention of brutalizing them, have left them to themselves, refusing them the enlightenment that was due; whilst, on the other hand, priests, whose ministry ought to be to lead men back to truth, have, from the same motives, been wanting in this imperative duty.

It would, however, have been easy for them,

especially for such as profess the Christian religion, to destroy fatal prejudices. Either through the authority and ascendancy afforded them by the tribunal of penitence, or by the public preaching which they exercise to the exclusion of all other persons, they were able, to attain this end, to fortify themselves with the light of reason and the precepts of religion. Yet superstitions, which a system of national education applied to one generation might have destroyed for ever, have not ceased to prevail for eighteen centuries. Would it have been otherwise if the sacerdotal body, consulting only worldly interests, had sought to overawe the people by ignorance and superstition?

This is an evil, however, which the councils have sought to remedy at different periods by prescribing laws to bishops and parish curates upon this very subject. Among a very great number of canons, we shall content ourselves with quoting the following: "The 42nd canon of the Council of Agde, in 506; the 31st canon of that of Orleans, in 511; and one of the Council of Rome, presided over by Pope Gregory II., held in 721. This last council pronounces, in its 12th canon, anathema against those who give superstitious preservatives, and against soothsayers, enchanters, and diviners."* We think we ought to quote the

* Si quis ariolos, aruspices, vel incantatores observaverit aut phylacteriis usus fuerit, anathema sit.

Council of Milan, held in 1565, inasmuch as it specifies the different kinds of superstition which exist even at the present day throughout Christendom. These are the terms used by this council in addressing the bishops, whom it commands to chastise severely and to excommunicate those who are addicted to these superstitious practices: "Let them chastise and banish all those who take upon themselves to divine by air, earth, fire, or inanimate things; by the inspection of the nails and lineaments of the body; by fate, dreams, the dead, and other means inspired by the devil to make people assure uncertain things as certain; all those who profess to predict the future, to discover concealed things, hidden treasures, and other things of this nature, which serve to seduce easily simple or too inquisitive persons; let them punish severely those who consult, in any matter, diviners, fortune-tellers, and every kind of magicians, who have advised other persons to consult them, or have put faith in them; let heavy punishments be inflicted on those who have made or sold rings, or any other things for magical or superstitious uses; let the astrologers who, from the movement, figure, or aspect of the sun, moon, and other stars, dare predict with certainty the actions which depend on the will of man, be also severely punished, and let those who may have consulted them confidently upon this subject be liable to the same punish-

ments; finally, let the bishops punish all those who, on undertaking a journey, or in the commencement or progress of any business, observe the days, the time, or the moments, the cry of animals, the singing or the flight of birds, the encountering of men or beasts, and thence draw an omen of the success of their enterprise.”*

The same duty is imposed on curates by the Council of Malines, in 1607. “As the clownish multitude,” says this council, “are often debased with superstitions through their ignorance, the curates ought to warn them against these errors.”† The fourth Council of Milan, held in 1577, recommends the curates to inform the bishops of the superstitions with which they may be acquainted, in order that the latter may afford a remedy.‡

* *Cæterosque omnes qui quovis artis magicæ et maleficii genere pactiones, et fœdera expresse, vel tacite cum dæmonibus faciunt, episcopi acriter puniant et e societate fidelium exterminant. Deinde omnes divinationem exaere, aqua, etc.—(Part. i., tit. 10.)*

† *Et quoniam rudis populus sæpe ex ignorantia superstitionibus inquinatur, parochi subditos suos diligenter de illis moneant et inter cætera, etc.—(Conc. Medin., tit. xv., cap. 3.)*

‡ *Parochi diligenter ei rei invigilent, ac si quod superstitiosum genus in suæ parochiæ hominibus animadvertant id semper ante proximam synodum tempore, quod episcopus præstiterit, ad illum in scriptis deferant; ut ei malo occurri opportune possit.—(Part. 1, cap. iv., tit. 15.)*

The Council of Toulouse, in the year 1590, is still, more precise when it commands the curates to make use of two efficacious means in their power, confession and preaching, in order to preserve the people from a malady so fatal to their souls. *

But what have been the results of these rescripts so frequently addressed to bishops and curates? They have been void; since the people have not ceased to be addicted to several of these superstitions, which lead them often to enmities and occasionally to homicidal vengeance, as it has been proved by the judgments of tribunals, even in our own time. What, then, in this respect, has been the use of auricular confession? It is philosophy, on the contrary, without either organisation, support, parish pulpits, or tribunal of penitence—nay, persecuted even by intolerant priests and oppressive governments—which alone has effected a few changes, and destroyed many errors and prejudices, at least among the higher classes of society.

Have not enmities and persecutions been known to be excited, and violence, nay, even the pain of

* Quæ ignorantia simplicitate que hominum superstitiose depellendorum morborum, aliarumque rerum inanes observationes temere irrepserunt, eas omnes sequenti abhortatione adductisque rationibus confessarii et concianotores a populi animis evellere et ab iis declinari curabunt.—(Concil. Tolos., c. xii.)

death, to be employed, with the assistance of the secular power, against those who refused to acknowledge this virtue of binding and loosing? What right has any one to pester a dying man, to demand confession-tickets to excommunicate physicians, when they lend their professional assistance to a patient, if, at their first or second visit, they do not send for a priest? This is what was prescribed, in 1567, by the Council of Siponto, in Italy.* It had already been commanded by the Council of Latran, under Innocent III.;† by that of Tortosa, in 1428; and, lastly, by another council, held the same year at Paris, by Jean de Nanton, Archbishop of Sens, which prescribes to physicians to exhort their patients in danger to confess their faults, and not to give them any remedies till they had made this exhortation—nay, even to refuse them every kind of assistance unless they comply with their invitation.‡

It is by means of confession that a great number of errors and prejudices, equally fatal to reli-

* *Medici post primam secundamve visitationem sub excommunicationis pœna, ad œgrotorum curationes non accedant, nisi certo cognoverit ipsos postquam in eum morbum inciderunt de eorum peccatis idoneo confessori confessos.*—(Concil. Lepant.) [Lepanto is in Greece; I cannot find that there ever was a council there. Lenglet de Fresney says there was a council at Siponto in 1567.]—*Transl.*

† Concil. Lateran., 1, 21.

‡ *Abrégé Chron. de l'Hist de France.*

gion, morality, and the happiness of those who submit to them, are propagated among Roman Catholics.

Besides, are the penances imposed by the priest in proportion to the evil or wrong produced by the sin? A few *pater-nosters*, psalms, or mechanical practices, are sufficient to tranquillize the consciences of the greatest sinners. There is, it is true, another kind of penance which some persons inflict upon themselves, who, troubled with deep remorse, or maddened by an extravagant superstition, or by the terror of everlasting punishments, believe they can only effect their salvation by depriving themselves of the most innocent enjoyments, and condemning themselves throughout the course of their lives to macerations, sufferings, and employments as painful as they are fruitless. Thus it is that illusion, superstition, and the suggestions inspired in the confessional, lead some persons to believe that they will in this manner make amends for their transgressions, or even, without having committed any serious ones, that they have no other means of making themselves worthy of Divine mercy and of securing their salvation.

To demonstrate how very repugnant this system of penance—both in its severity and in its mildness, established by casuistical theologians—is to reason as well as to religion, it is sufficient to recal the

motives which gave rise to it, and the modifications it has undergone according to times, places, circumstances, and the more or less severe or dissolute character of confessors. There is but one true penitence salutary to him who practises it, and useful to all : it is to repair the harm and the wrong done to our neighbour, to cease to commit any, and to seek every opportunity, according as circumstances and our means may permit, of being serviceable to all men.

What is the object of those frequent ordinary confessions so strongly recommended, those details about imaginary faults and the most innocent actions in life, which form the matter of confession, especially with women, if it be not to master consciences and keep them continually in a state of dependence? Is it not for the selfsame purpose that those frequent general confessions are ordered and vainly reiterated to obtain a pardon, which has already been granted several times? Thus it is those scruples are raised which torment timorous consciences, without producing any benefit.

Let us consider confession relatively to another of its inconveniences.

Virgins, by being continually told that they are the brides of Jesus Christ, become superstitious—they imagine themselves to be divinely inspired; nay, they are led even so far as to commit sacrilege, as we have shown by quoting several instances. How could the imaginations of those

poor girls withstand the power of such illusions? This is, however, a doctrine taught by several fathers of the Church, and propagated in all the ascetic books with which the minds of the nuns are intrusted. Thus it is that they raise up fanatics, like the one that appeared in Belgium in 1100. This man, named Touchelin, having protested against the dissoluteness of the clergy and the abuses of the Roman Church, formed a sect, managed to be considered as a god, seduced women, and even armed the people to support his doctrine. Having assembled his partisans in a public square, and caused the image of the Holy Virgin to be brought, he solemnly espoused her. If women can be the brides of Jesus Christ, there can be no reason, he thought, why men should not be the bridegrooms of the Holy Virgin.

Casuists have likewise introduced into confession another kind of alliance no less extraordinary, between the devil under the human form, masculine with women, feminine with men. This doctrine, a token of the grossest ignorance and superstition, is still taught at the present day to the young Levites, who are to interrogate women at the tribunal of confession. We find it thus expressed in a work by J. P. Mollet, a priest, and entitled: *Compendium Theologiæ Moralis ad usum Theologiæ Candidatorum, superiorum permissu*. 1834. "Intimacy with the devil," says this compendium, "if it exist, contains, besides the horror

of it, a perfectly especial wickedness to be expressed in confession—in *confessionem exprimendam*—on account of the sin against religion, thus caused by familiarity with the most cruel enemy of God.”*

Other practices, as fantastical as contrary to common sense and decency, have been ordered by popes and bishops. Thus the penitentiary of Rome, quoted by Baluze, in the fourteenth century, orders that a harlot shall be promenaded for forty days, stripped to the waist, and bearing on her head a [placard, whereon the sin of which she has been guilty shall be legibly written.† A capitulary says “that a woman who has insulted another shall carry stones in her chemise at the procession on Sunday, if she will not pay the fine.”‡

Another no less extraordinary custom is, that the confession of the living on the account of the dead, by declaring to a priest the sins which the latter had committed during their lives, was admitted as efficacious. Peter the Venerable quotes on this subject the following example, which can-

* *Compendium*, &c., lib. iii., p. 37.

† *Quadragesima diebus per communia fora, nudo corpori ab usque ad umbilicum incedens, schedulam in delicto conscriptam deferet in capite manifeste.*—(Baluz., in *Append. ad capit.*, col. 1563.)

‡ *Mulier quæ mulieri convicia dixerit . . . si nummos solvere noluerit, lapides ad professionem portabit, die dominica, in camisia sua.*—(Capitul., ann. 1223, apud Carpent., *Nov. Gloss.*, verbo *Processiones*.)

not be called in question, since it relates to his own mother, “who,” says he, “placed herself upon her husband’s tomb, and declared his sins, as well as those which she herself had committed during the whole course of her life. She continued to make this enumeration till about the middle of the night, as if it had been her husband himself who was speaking; and, as if they had changed persons, the husband was the penitent through the medium of his wife.” *

The history of the Church, and especially the Lives of the Saints, present us with several facts, established even by miracles, according to which there exist, or at least have existed, direct communications between the living and the dead, especially relatively to absolution, or to the retaining of sins. Thus, after having corresponded with the inhabitants of the other world, it became still more easy to establish an *epistolary confession*—a name by which it was designated by the Casuists.

Relations of this kind date even from the fourth century, since Saint Basil, according to what is stated by Saint Amphilochus, bishop of Icona, was the principal actor during his life, and even

* Ad confitendum conversa ordini ab initio et enarrare universa conjugis, et deinde propria peccata, seu crimina cœpit, et confitendo ad mediam usque fere noctem processit. Loquebatur vel ut ore defuncti, et quasi mutatis personis in conjugem vir pœnitebat.—(Pet. Verenab., lib. ii., epist. 17.)

after his death, in an event of the same sort, which is related as follows: "A woman, as distinguished by her birth as by her riches, wrote down all the sins she had committed from her youth up to a very advanced age: she fixed her seal to this confession, and waited till Saint Basil came to say his prayers. She cast this paper at his feet, and fell on her knees, crying: 'Take compassion on me, O holy man of God!' Basil, after having finished his prayers, opened the letter, in which he found no trace of writing, except that of a great sin of impiety: *solum autem quoddam factum ejus impium, indeletum remansit*. The bishop having returned this confession to the lady, and the latter having, a short time after, met the body of Saint Basil, which they were about to inter, cast her confession upon the coffin, relating to the people what had happened. A priest opened the letter, and said 'that everything was effaced.'"* If this story should be called into question, it does not the less prove the custom of epistolary confession. Epistolary confession took place also without any miracle between living persons. This is confirmed by another event, no less extraordinary, which happened at the close of the sixth century. A woman, of the island of Crete, having committed an enormous crime of which she durst not

* Biblioth. des Pères, t. iv., 101, &c. Edit. de Lyon.

accuse herself verbally, wrote it on a paper, which she handed to Saint John the Almoner, a patriarch of Alexandria; but the latter did not grant her a pardon till after he was dead. For this purpose he came out of his tomb, and gave the woman back her paper, upon which she found these words: "It is for the sake of John, my servant, that your sin has been forgiven."*

The city of Paris was, in days of old, the scene of a no less marvellous epistolary confession: "A young student, unable to confess by word of mouth, sent his confession in writing to a monk. The latter having opened the paper, *found that all it had contained was effaced.* Then the monks sent for the young man, and *told him, showing him his paper, 'that all his sins were forgiven.'*"†

Though we could relate many other facts of the same kind, we shall confine ourselves to that of a bishop of Soissons, in 871, and to that of a bishop of Mans, in 873. The former wrote to Hinemar, archbishop of Rheims, a letter, in which he asked

* Propter Joannem, servum meum, deletum est tuum magnum peccatum.—(In Vita S. Joan. Elemos. a Leoncius Epist. Nemozia.)

† Mox ut abbas cartulam ad legendum aperuit, totam ejus continentiam deletam invenit . . . advocantes scholarem, ostenderunt schedulam dicentes ejus peccata divinitus esse deleta.—(Cesaire d'Heisterbach, Miracula, c. 10.)

him for the remission of all his sins, which was granted him, as we see in Hincmar's reply, where we find the following words: "May God, by his grace and omnipotency, and by virtue of the Holy Ghost, forgive you all your sins, He being the source of all pardon; may He deliver you from every ill, preserve you in all goodness, and lead you to everlasting life, and to participate with saintly priests. Amen."*

The latter bishop, known by the name of Robert XXIV., who had been guilty of great crimes, finding himself dangerously ill in bed, wrote to several bishops to ask them for absolution. Here are a few passages of his letter:—"I am convinced that the wickedness of no man can equal that with which I have abandoned myself, from my youth to the most execrable crimes. Their number is infinite, for, if they be compared to those of other men, no person could be found to be so guilty. There exists no kind of sin to which I have not abandoned myself, or which does not make me deserve to be scourged, or even burnt! I am frightened at the awful end which awaits me, and I dread

* *Gratia et omni potentia sua, virtute sancti spiritus, qui est remissio omnium peccatorum, dimittat tibi omnia peccata tua, liberet te ab omni malo, conservet in omni bono et perducatur te ad vitam æternam, et ad sanctorum sacerdotum consortium. Amen.*—(Hincmar, Opera, Epist. 40, t. i., p. 686. Edit. Paris., 1645.)

the Divine vengeance, which I deserve on account of the sins into which I have been hurried by the licentious suggestions of the flesh ; and if the mercy of God did not pardon me, he would justly be avenged on my crimes. For this reason, my members being inert, my body in dissolution, and having lost all my strength, I do not cease to implore your beneficent piety with my sobs and groans, in order that, by the power which you possess from Heaven, you may deliver me from my sins, and I may be enabled, through your prayers, to escape hell, and be worthy, through your mediation, to participate in celestial felicity.”*

The prelates, in answer to his request, sent him

* Si quidem comprehendi nullius hominis valet solertia, quibus, a diebus adolescentiæ meæ vicibus, execrabilia contraxi opera. Excedunt enim pluribus sui numerorum fines, quia ad comparationem meorum peccaminum nullus invenitur iniquus. Nullum quippe genus peccati invenire potest, cui me non subdiderem, quibusque fascibus et loris non sim circumdatus ! . . . Nunc ultimum vocationis meæ diem ingemiscens, paveo, quia quæ male carni consentiens perpetravi, digna ultione puniri pertimesco. Et nisi Dei clementia toleraret, merito me jam pro meis sceleribus ultris vindicta ulcisceretur. Id circo fessis artubus dissolutisque corporis basibus, omni viscerum meorum valentia omissa, pietatis vestræ misericordiam singultu interposito implorare non cesso, quatenus potestate verbis cœlitus conlata, vincula meorum piaculorum enodatis, et precum vestrarum studiis commissa mea petetis, ut cum reprobis non ducar ad Tartara, quin potius vestro interventu cœlestia merear sublimari ad gaudia.—(Bondonnet, Vie des Evêques du Mans.)

a letter, in which they gave him an absolution, conceived in nearly the same terms as that which we have just mentioned. This is what was then termed *absolutio literaria*, and was very orthodox, since it was given, on this occasion, by a certain number of bishops: a very convenient practice, for, without leaving his chamber, or kneeling before a priest; nay, without speaking to him or knowing him, a man could send to him by post, some three or four hundred leagues, a list of his sins, and receive absolution in the same way. But everything in the Church is modified, according to times and circumstances. Accordingly, this mode of confession was proscribed in 1602, by Clement VIII., who excommunicated such as practised it, or either taught or maintained the proposition which we give in the note.*

We find a bishop who, believing one priest was not sufficient to cause the gates of heaven to be opened to him, applied to several at once. There was likewise a time when people believed that an absolution given by two priests was far more efficacious than if they received it only from one. Here is an instance recorded in the acts of Saint Gerard: "He hastened to call a priest, in order that he might put on the armour of Jesus Christ,

* *Licere per literas, seu internuntium, confessario absenti peccata sacramentaliter confiteri, et ab eo absente absolutionem obtinere, et ad minus uti falsam, temerariam et scandalosam.*

and give him absolution for the sins he had committed with a sinful woman. The priest, *as is the custom*, called another priest, and, one Sunday, they delivered him from the bonds of sin.” *

We may judge of the rapidity with which confessions were made under certain circumstances, of the validity of absolutions given away by handfuls, as well as of the reality and efficacy of conversions, from accounts made by missionaries among Pagan nations. Thus, a father, named Fraes, said he had heard more than thirteen thousand confessions in one day, during his abode in Japan. Another Jesuit, named Jarrius, boasted of having heard fifteen thousand in the same space of time. Some have been satisfied with fixing the number at five or six thousand. How many Christians remain after such prodigious zeal and labour? Not one.

In the eleventh century, a system had been imagined of multiplying the number and the duration of penances, *ad infinitum*; thus it was that the priests made themselves masters of consciences. It was believed that every sin of the same kind

* Vehementer vocari fecit quemdam clericum presbyterum . . . qui armis Christi se ab eo indueret; et de criminibus seus, a Jesu Christo Domino, qui peccatori mulieri indulsit, ipsum presbyterum rogavit et eum absolveret. Ipse presbyter, sicut consuetum est, vocavit alium sacerdotem, socium suum, et absolverunt eum a peccatorum vinculis, in die Dominico.—(Charta, an. 1080, quoted by Carpent., Nov. Gloss., verbo Pœnitent.)

deserved a particular penance. "A penance," says Fleury, "was reckoned for every crime : thus, a man who had committed thirty homicides, and as many perjuries and adulteries, had enough for several centuries ; and thence arose afterwards these indulgences of so many years, which we find in certain bulls. We know what were those penances—flagellations, and elicitation of psalms. There were saints in those times who devoted themselves to penance for others."*

The organizers of auricular confession have been fruitful in penitential means. There was a time when they prescribed as penance cold baths to people fond of warm ones. Canons still exist which imposed cold baths upon the Anglo-Saxons, whilst they forbade them to take warm ones during the period of their penance.†

It was likewise imagined that people might satisfy God, by putting on the costume of some religious order : thus, girding the loins with the girdle of Saint Francis was a meritorious act. This practice was termed *penitence de Saint Dominique*, or *de Saint François* : they who submitted to it were under the protection of these monastic orders, and participated in the favours and privileges granted by the popes. We have seen in

* Fleury, Mœurs des Chrétiens.

† Johnson's Canons, anno 963.

the cities of Spain, men, women, and even children rigged out in these ensigns.

But the clergy, after having modified penance under different forms, had recourse, in order to conquer the opposition brought against their views and orders, to a means directly opposed to the precepts and spirit of the Gospel, that of material constraint; a system which became introduced at the very origin of the corruption of Christianity, and which the Church has perseveringly supported till the present day. "I find in Spain," says Fleury, "forced penances, as early as the seventeenth century, the bishops seeing that several sinners never came to submit to penance, complained of it in the parliaments, and entreated the princes, to oblige them to it by their temporal power."* He quotes on this subject the 2nd and 6th canon of the Council of Tibur, in 895, and the sixth canon of that of Toledo. "I reckon," adds the same historian, "among forced penances, those prohibitions which the bishops made to impenitent sinners, to eat meat, wear linen, ride on horseback, or to do other such things."†

This violence is a right of the Church, since it is authorized by the canons and by one of the most

* Fleury, *Discours sur l' Hist. Ecclés.*, disc. iii., § 16.

† *Id.*, *ibid.*

clever orthodox Casuists. This father of the Church does not hesitate to affirm that a penitent ought to turn monk, if he be so ordered by his confessor, who, according to him, cannot be mistaken in anything he orders. "It appears," says he, "that if a confessor should order anybody to enter into holy orders, he is bound to obey, inasmuch as this submission is prescribed by certain canons; and, likewise, whatever be the severity of the penance, even for a trifling sin, the penitent is obliged to submit to it.

It is because the priest commands as having the key of knowledge and the authority of a divine judgment, exempt from the errors of humanity."*

This pretended right of violence, which, to be put in practice in our time, would require only a government submissive to the orders of the clergy, has just been proclaimed, at the very moment we are writing, in a long and verbose mandate, by the Cardinal de Bonald, to condemn the *Manuel*

* Videtur, quod si sacerdos injungat alicui quod intret in religionem, tenetur facere, præcipue quia quidam canones videntur istam pœnitentiam taxare. Et similiter quod, quantumque magnam pœnitentiam pro peccato parvo, injungat pœnitentiam, pœnitens facere tenetur. Et dicendum quod hoc intelligendum est de his quæ sacerdos in quantum habet clavem scientiæ et auctoritatis, per divinum judicium, et non secundum humanum errorem, injungit.—(Thomas, iv., sent. D. 16. In exposit. text.)

du droit public ecclésiastique, written by M. Dupin. This clever jurisconsult states in his work that "the Church has not the right to constrain by force or corporeal punishment." To which the Archbishop of Lyons replies: "This proposition is false; brought forward several times by the enemies of the Church, it has been several times condemned." It is evident that if the bishops had bayonets at their disposal, they would well know how to silence the enemies of the Church, and impose a good penance upon them.

But another penance which the clergy have, at all times, found means to impose, at least upon such as believe in them, is pecuniary penance, *pœnitentia argentea*, as we have already said, although this underhand simony has been proscribed by the councils, and—which is more remarkable—by the popes themselves. We have quoted, and could continue to quote an uninterrupted series of instances of confessions in which the priest receives a direct salary for the sacramental confession which he administers. Even at the present day, when a priest is called to the bed-side of a dying person, does he not find a compensation, at least among persons in easy circumstances? This is not, I say once more, the way in which the early Christians understood religion. Fleury, whom we have just quoted, seeks to palliate this practice even while condemning it. "In order," says he,

“to render penance more sensible, pecuniary fines were added, which were exacted before absolution was given, and, provided they were paid, the rest of the penance was easily passed over.”*

Lastly, a thirst for lucre has caused a hundred kinds of superstitions to be invented, which, grounded upon the penitentiary system of auricular confession, has enriched the treasures of the Church. Such are the sale of indulgences, relics, images, scapularies, crosses, chaplets, consecrated medals, and privileged churches and altars. These means of redeeming sins have been so multiplied, that it would be an easy matter to draw out of purgatory, in the space of a year, a number of souls far more considerable than that of the persons who die in the course of a century.

Remunerations attached to the celebration of masses, that is to say, of the most venerable mystery of Catholicism,—the august sacrifice for the redemption of mankind,—have become, in the hands of the secular and regular clergy, an inexhaustible source of riches since the introduction of the doctrine of a purgatory, whence souls may be delivered by the prayers of a priest. We think we ought to submit to the reader, on this head, some observations and a calculation presented to the Grand Duke Leopold, about the masses daily said in Tuscany.

* Fleury, *Discours sur l'Hist. Ecclés.*, disc. iv., § 15.

“If it were true,” says the author, “that a deliverance from purgatory was effected every time a privileged mass is said, whether the privilege depended on the person celebrating, or was attached to the place where it is celebrated, purgatory would always be void of inhabitants; nay, there must be even a long credit account of future deliverances for souls not yet plunged into those transitory flames. In every parish church, the high altar is privileged by an indulgence of Clement XIII.; there is always one of the same kind in every church of regular monks, provided it has seven altars, and in every other church the privilege exists at least for one of the days in the week. The number of priests who possess a personal privilege is very great. According to calculation, the privileged masses which are said every day in the single city of Florence and in the diocese amount to several hundreds; they, consequently, far surpass the number of persons who die daily. The same proportion exists throughout the rest of the Catholic universe.” *

But do they always celebrate the masses for which they are paid ready money? M. Llorente gives us an evident proof that this is not always the case. “Friar Juan de la Véga,” says he, in his “Critical History of the Inquisition,” “being

* Memorial of the senator Rucellai, made for Leopold.

summoned before the tribunal of the Inquisition (for having seduced the nuns of a monastery) avowed that he had received, as provincial of the Carmelites, money for eleven thousand eight hundred masses which had not been said."

CHAPTER III.

FATAL EFFECTS, DANGERS, AND INUTILITY OF
AURICULAR CONFESSION.

IF the remonstrances and councils of a confessor are sufficiently powerful upon the minds of some persons to lead them back to a more regular course of life, daily experience proves that such cases are extremely rare, and that even those who confess the most frequently are not less subject to sin than those who never go to the confessional. Either conversion occurs before a man applies to a priest, or it never takes place. What should we think of a person who, offending some potentate every day, should come every day into his presence to avow his transgressions without ever ceasing to commit the same offences?

This is precisely the case of those who habitually reiterate their confession, without ever amend-

ing; it is a mockery, or, if they will, an inconsistency to which they are led by erroneous ideas of duty, by prejudice, habit, or the fear of public opinion, and often merely with a view to worldly interests. But all these causes and motives are incapable of producing real and permanent amendment.

He who, on examining himself, knows he has violated the divine laws, will change his conduct if he conceive a sincere repentance; he will become virtuous without being under the necessity of having recourse to a priest or a Casuist; for, if you did not impose imaginary duties and obligations upon him, he would easily discern good from evil, and could, from the mere impulse of his conscience, avoid the one and practise the other. If, moreover, any one should not believe himself able to direct himself alone in the paths of virtue; if he should think he needs counsel, could no other person be found capable of giving it but the mandatory of a bishop, who has but just left his seminary? Happily, there exist enough honest men, enlightened by study and experience, for you to be able to find some one to whom you may apply, without being under the absolute necessity of having recourse to your parish priest. It is, then, both wiser and more prudent to renounce a practice which, without possessing any real advantages, presents serious inconveniences.

The irregularities and the corruptions of morals produced by auricular confession are the more serious as the administration of this practice is entrusted to persons who, notwithstanding the gift of grace, are not less liable than other men to an inclination innate in all living beings. Nay, they are the more exposed to gratify this inclination, as, on the one hand, they are unable to satisfy it rationally, through the opposition they meet with in laws, prejudices, and in public censure, yielding more easily than the temperate man, placed in ordinary circumstances; and, on the other hand, the priest, receiving at an age when his passions are the most active an instruction which makes him familiar with vice, must be led into it more easily. But the danger becomes still more imminent when what he had at first considered only theoretically is every day realised in his mind: the example of so captivating a vice presenting itself every instant before his eyes, and seeming to be authorised by an almost general practice, causes him to yield the more easily as he finds frequently the opportunity, without fearing to compromise either his reputation or his profession.

Auricular confession, though very inconvenient, would have been fraught with less danger, at least as far as relates to morals, if it had been entrusted to married priests. But marriage, which might make priests moral characters and preserve

them from danger, has been proscribed. The species of horror and the criminality attached to marriage were established in the earlier ages of Christianity by a few enthusiasts or fanatics; the absolute abstinence of the sexes and an exaggerated sterile chastity were recommended and ever commanded as the most perfect, the first, and most meritorious of virtues. Thence originated that useless and fatal race of monks, which has become the more pernicious, as it has strayed from its primitive institution, for it has ultimately descended to be nothing more than a papal instrument. Accordingly, we see that, in contradiction to the canons and the ancient discipline of the Church, the popes have invested monks with the right of directing and absolving souls. History tells us the use they have made of it.

This monkish celibacy has not been less fatal since its introduction among the regular clergy, and in consequence of the adoption of this same doctrine among the laity. It is this especially that has contributed to propagate a vice now become general in both sexes, as is affirmed by priests, who are better able to answer for it from a long exercise of auricular confession, or by persons who have been enabled to verify it from the inquiries they have made on this subject. This is what is said by one of the most renowned of the practical Casuists: "This is a sin very difficult to

be corrected, because the opportunity is ever present to the individual; and it is so general, that I am inclined to believe that it is the cause of the damnation of the greater part of mankind.”* The remedy given by this physician of souls is singular enough: it consists in confessing three times a week, if possible: *Ut fiat (confessio) ter in hebdomada, si fieri potest.* But experience proves the inefficacy of the sacrament; many a person confesses every month—every week, without correcting himself of his bad habits. Better remedies for this evil might be found; such as paternal surveillance and education, so opposite to those of the colleges, where confession is, however, an obligatory prescription of scholastic discipline; and such also as the councils of friendship and reciprocal confidence between children and relations, the representation of the fatal consequences of these bad habits, and the restoring to marriage the consideration which fanaticism grants to celibacy.

If everything that passes in convents were known, we should see that confession, more frequent in those houses than their changing their linen, is not a preservative against bad morals,

* Est autem hoc peccatum difficillimæ emendationis, quia occasio fere semper est cum homine, et est adeo universale, ut crederim maximam partem damnatorum hoc fieri peccato.—(F. Toletanus, Instit. Sacerdot., ad Pœnit., l. v., c. 13, art. 10.)

whereas it has been more than once the means of introducing them, as the reader has had an opportunity of judging from what has been said. The inquiries we have made on this subject, in France and abroad, induce us to believe that there exists in those establishments of recluse *célibataires* more irregularities than is generally believed. Were it possible to remove entirely the veil which shrouds those melancholy abodes, what should we not see? For it is lawful to judge of the unknown by what is already known.

How is it possible that these unfortunate victims, at an age of the most complete credulity and inexperience, seduced and deceived by the interested or erroneous suggestions of their relations—ay, often through confession—should not be led astray into vice, when, the instinct of nature developing itself in its full energy, happens to make them reflect upon their sad and deplorable situation?

The penalties enacted by the councils against the irregularities which have prevailed in the convents for ages, lend their support to what we advance, and prove that confession does not even check vice in those abodes of sanctity. According to a synod held in 742, if a nun committed herself, she was scourged with rods three different times, and put in prison; she was also subjected to a penance of bread and water for a whole year. The

sixth general Council of Constantinople deposes the bishops, priests, deacons, and under-deacons convicted of amours with nuns. Laymen were likewise excommunicated for the same sin.

Although we have amply demonstrated, in the preceding chapters, the dangers and criminal abuses of sacerdotal confession, it will not be unseasonable, considering the importance of the subject, to adduce other facts and observations confirmatory of the same opinion.

Erasmus, well versed in theological controversies, informs us, though very reservedly, of the irregularities which were practised in his day, that is, about the middle of the sixteenth century. "Penitents," says he, "often fall into the hands of priests who, under the pretence of confession, commit acts which are not fit to be mentioned; they who ought to correct morals become the accomplices—the teachers and disciples of debauchery. Would to God that my warnings were unfounded, and that there did not exist everywhere so many examples of these irregularities, of which I speak only in sorrow, and cannot mention without blushing." * The same writer very wisely

* *Confitentes in eos sæpe sacerdotes incidere, qui sub prætextu confessionis patrant non referenda, proque medicis, fiunt aut socii, aut magistri, aut discipuli turpitudinis. Utinam videar hoc frustra monuisse, ac non tam multa passim exempla occurrerent; quæ nec sine dolore recordari, nec*

observes that confession tends to deprave the morals of young priests by the detailed accounts of obscenities which excite their curiosity and inflame their passions. They converse of these things with their penitents, or with their fellow-ecclesiastics, which talk leads necessarily to evil. The knowledge of the general corruption tends to corrupt them; these shameful practices being every day presented to their minds. The irregularities of the priests, which the clergy and even governments so carefully conceal, transpire nevertheless; and these examples deprave the laity. Erasmus adds to these observations that, in his youth, he had known harlots applaud their own irregularities, because they had heard a curate say that priests had confessed, at the time of the jubilee, of having seduced their penitents.* “People justify their crimes,” continues the same author, “when they see a great number of people committing more enormous ones. Thus, a priest addicted to libertinism, justifies his own bad conduct when he learns that others have committed more monstrous crimes; and, the more so, when he knows that men who make a profession of sanctity and chastity are guilty of the greatest debauchery.” Erasmus says,

sine pudore passim referre.—(Erasmus, *Exomologia*, seu *modus confitendi*, p. 129.)

* Erasmus, *Exomologia*, p. 153.

in the same place, that a theologian had related to him that he had heard a priest—a director of a convent of nuns—boasting that he had seduced two hundred virgins, and that this theologian justified his own bad conduct by this example.*

The authors best informed on this subject, those even whose morals were most dissolute, testify how very frequent the solicitations of the confessors were with their penitents. Listen to the language of the famous Casuist Escobar: “In these calamitous times, we have frequently seen the sacred sanctuary, where the remission of sins is given, defiled, which ought to make us fear a signal vengeance of the Lord upon his ministers.”† And again: “This enormous crime has spread to such an extent in these days, that everybody ought to oppose it with all his might, and apply a fit remedy.”‡ He says, moreover, that people often see “priests confess, celebrate mass, and lead at the same time a licentious life, being addicted to the sins of the flesh.”§

* Erasmus, *Exomologia*, p. 154.)

† *Nefas calamitosis his temporibus ita actum et scœpius patratum, est sanctum confessionis lavacrum obscenitatibus pollutum vidisse, ut magna in suos superna timeri potuit ultio.*—(Escob., *Tract de Confess.*, sollicit. in exord., p. 1, col. 1.)

‡ *Hoc enorme facinus hac nostra in tempestate in tantum crevisse, ut debeant omnes pro viribus ei occurrere et ad hoc remedia opportuna opponere.*—(Id., *ibid.*, part. ii., quæst. 2.)

§ *Sacerdotes confessorios accedere quotidie ad sacram con-*

This kind of crime appears to have been very common before the reformation of Luther, to judge from what is said by the writers of that period. It will be sufficient to bring forward the testimony of Dalle, an English theologian, who published, in 1661, a special treatise on confession. "The partisans of confession," says he, "cannot deny the shameful abuse which several priests and penitents made of this institution in former days, and which they make of it even now. On this account a great many persons have fallen into the most serious sins. Auricular confession formerly occasioned great scandal—it causes it at the present day, and will not cease to produce it as long as it shall exist. Priests well know the shameful compacts that are often the result of the secret conversations which pass in that place of darkness. How desirable would it have been for many women that confession had never been instituted!" * Con-

fessionem, sacrumque facere, et simul inhonestam vitam agere flagitiis carnis deditos.—(Escob., Tract de Confess., in exord., l. acta.)

* Ipsi negare non possunt quin plurimi et sacerdotes et peccatores hoc instituto sæpe turpiter et abusi sunt olim et nunc etiam abutuntur: quim multi exejus occasione in gravissima peccata lapsi sunt. . . . Quæ confessio tam multa scandala et peperit jampridem et quotidie parit et in posterum, quandiu retenebitur, paritura est. Sciunt ipsi quam turpes sæpe fiant in illius arcani colloquii latebris nundinationes, quamque multis mulieribus optandum fuerit nunquam esse confessionem.—(Dallius, p. 170 et 171.)

fessors themselves acknowledge that their exhortations do not check the dissoluteness of morals. Erasmus relates on this subject that a Franciscan monk, whilst preaching in a town, said that a mountain formed of flint-stone would not be sufficient to stone adulterers to death, if the ancient law of Moses were still in use.*

Moreover, these monstrous abuses, which have existed and still exist among Roman Catholics in Europe, are still more numerous in regions little frequented by Europeans, for the curb of public opinion and other equally powerful motives act there but feebly. There are among the missionaries, especially when they spring from the monastic orders, many bad priests, who do not lose any opportunity of giving themselves up to their dissolute inclinations. We find in the correspondence of Ricci, bishop of Pistoia, a letter from a Paulist monk, in 1798, who says, in speaking of the convents of either sex in the Portuguese possessions, "The regular priests had become the bonzes of Japan, and the nuns the disciples of Diana; their convents were seraglios for the monks, as I have proved, when at Lisbon, by positive facts, and by showing that the nuns were more frequently mothers than abandoned women."†

* Erasm.. *Exomologesis*, p. 153.

† Tregolari erano divenuti gli bonzi di Giappone e le mo-

The grand argument used by the partisans of auricular confession is, that it discovers and represses the crimes which are beyond the reach of the tribunals; whence result great advantages relatively to public order and the security of individuals. To this it may be answered, that they who are in the habit of committing great crimes seldom accuse themselves of them; and even when they do, they declare only those for which they are sure of obtaining absolution. We never find in these persons any sincere or permanent amendment.

If any one will take the trouble to analyse auricular confession, he will see that it grants full scope and an actual impunity to the greatest crimes. Do confessors ask the mighty to give an account of their conduct—the mighty who commit the most manifest infractions of the natural law and the most precise and obligatory precepts of the Gospel? Did the founder of the Christian religion, who has comprehended his whole law in the precept of charity and in the virtues which necessarily emanate from it, exempt from it those men who inherit power and riches? Did he not say that his kingdom is not of this world? Did he

nache discepoli di Diana, e loro monasteri, li serragli dei regolari, come ho provato in questa costè, co fatti espressi delle monache che partoriscono più che le donne cattive.—(Potter, *Vie de Ricci*, ii., 474.)

not cast his malediction upon the rich? Yet you, who pretend to be invested with a power equal to his, approve by your silence, nay, you even absolve the most revolting misdeeds of the powerful and wealthy.

Examine history, and see what has passed from the days of Theodosius down to the present time. You will find kings and princes who, in their conquests and unjust wars, have sacrificed to their ambition and pride the blood and money, not of a single individual, but of several millions of men, and who have ravaged, wasted, and reduced whole provinces to misery. You do not consider, therefore, these deeds as robberies and murders, since you remain silent, nay more, approve, applaud, and absolve in the very act of crime! Every year, every month, every day, you hear and direct the guilty with your counsels, and you give them, on their leaving your confessional, the bread which you have just consecrated. Yet you say you are set over us to enlighten and conduct the consciences of princes and the proud ones of the earth, into the paths of true religion, and that they owe you an unlimited submission! If there ever was a case, this was one on which to employ your *compelle illos intrare*, and your anathemas, of which you have known how to make so good a use, whenever there was any question of worldly interests.

But why do you never rise against that thirst after riches, that material interest which debases, degrades, and corrupts, and which Jesus Christ never ceased to reprove? How can you quietly witness the incessant spoliation of the people, to satisfy the luxury and licentious pleasures of that crowd of servile courtiers, greedy flatterers, insatiable mistresses, men ever ready to sell their consciences and their native land, monopolists and stock-jobbers, who are incessantly speculating upon the public fortune and the ruin of individuals? Do you believe that theft consists only in stealing private property, and that a powerful or cunning man who appropriates to himself, by force or stratagem, public or private money, is not guilty of a real larceny, merely because, having the authority of unjust laws, or the protection of a corrupt government, he can do so with impunity? Do you believe that God will not call that crowd of inveterate sinners to account, merely because none is demanded by you or by the world? Suppose the world willing to do so, it cannot; you can, but you will not: you comfort their consciences by your criminal winking at their misdeeds.

How can you expect men to put faith in your religion, when they see you, throughout a long series of years, ever reiterating absolution to princes, influential men, constantly adulterers or

fornicators, and who, by their contagious example, multiply, *ad infinitum*, vices of this description? Are, then, these persons, whom you place beyond all virtue, not subject to be deprived of the unlawful pleasures of the flesh?

Do you believe also that you can, with a safe conscience, give absolution to those legislators—those ministers who, in proposing or voting enormous budgets, a great part of which is employed in corruption, in salaries disproportioned to the labour and merits of the functionaries, in a complicated administration organized for the purpose of multiplying servile creatures? Do you believe those legislators have acquired the right of filching from the people the fruit of their labour, which is often not sufficient to procure them absolute necessities, to live and support their families, knowing that such funds, instead of being employed solely for the welfare and service of the country, will be sweated down, become the prey of intrigue, and serve to feed the luxury and pleasures of a few privileged men of an idle, selfish, and corrupt aristocracy? Is this what you call evangelical justice, charity, and brotherly love? Who would not believe it, since you remain silent upon so manifest a violation of the law of Christ, absolve the spoilers every day, and are incessantly declaiming in your homilies, mandates, writings, and newspapers, against *philosophers*, who, nevertheless,

reject all the iniquities of which we have just spoken, but who, unfortunately, have received no authority from heaven, as you have—if we are to believe you—to make them cease? You openly proscribe from your religion those whom you term heretics; act then in the same way towards such as violate the law of the Gospel in a more formal and more criminal manner. Do not surround them, from their cradle to their tomb, with the *prestiges* of a religion which they despise every day, and in which, for the most part, they do not believe. Do not receive from their hands sums of money for profanations which accuse you, or for services that you owe only to a sincere believer, and to such as correct themselves of their faults by an equally sincere repentance.

We cannot pass over in silence a scandal which has been displayed, for more than two centuries before the face of Europe, in the classic land of Catholicism, and which undoubtedly owes its continuance to auricular confession—we mean the practice of adultery, tacitly received as lawful almost throughout Italy, especially in Rome, Florence and Naples. We ourselves, from travelling three times into that country, one of which journeys dates from sixty years ago, have found this custom, denominated *Cicisbeism*, especially established among persons of the higher classes of society. A husband and a wife observe together

the laws of marriage during the first year; but it is a thing of course, when this period has elapsed, for the wife to take a lover under the name of *Cicisbeo*, and the husband becomes the *cavaliere servente* of another woman. This anti-social practice is authorised by the priests, who constantly give absolution to the persons who present themselves, in these cases, at a confessional; and this, not once a year, but ten or twelve times, if devotion induces the guilty parties to enjoy the benefit of the grace attached to this sacrament. Such are the fruits of this confession, so beneficial to morals!

In order the better to make the reader comprehend the fatal effects of *Cicisbeism*, we will quote an author, who thus presents its consequences:—

“The peace of families,” says Sismondi, “was banished from all Italy—no husband any longer regarded his wife as a faithful companion associated with his existence; no man any longer found in her a support in adversity, a saviour in danger, a comforter in despair; no father durst affirm that the children who bore his name were his own, and no one any longer felt himself tied to his child by the sentiments of nature. Incessantly annoyed in his own house by the friend of his wife, and separated from a part of his family pent up in convents, he was considered only as the adminis-

trator of his fortune; and it was not because women had lovers, but because it became a law that they must have them, that the Italians ceased to be men." *

The inutility of confession may likewise be demonstrated by comparing the state of morals in countries where the Reformation is established with that of places under the dominion of Roman Catholicism. If we find vices and crimes in the former, they are certainly not more numerous than in Catholic countries, which ought to be the case if, as it is pretended, confession was a curb to human passions. The man who is sufficiently corrupt to commit a crime with premeditation will go to the confessional, if he be accustomed to do so, or if he believe it to be for his interest, and will likewise return there after he has committed it. So far from dreading that tribunal he will present himself with the hope, and even with the certainty, of receiving absolution.

The opinion of those about us, together with the certainty of undergoing the punishment inflicted upon crime by human laws, are far more potent to restrain men than ever were the threats of any religion whatsoever. The proof is, that he who will never commit this or that action before men, does not hesitate to do so when he thinks he is seen only by God. Accordingly, the violation

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. d'Ital.*

of religious laws is infinitely more common and frequent than the infraction of those inscribed in our codes. The dread of an immediate and certain punishment is far more powerful than that of one dimly seen in a distant future, which, for the most part, produces only a weak and momentary impression on the mind.

If auricular confession, as experience proves, has no influence upon the conduct of men, with the exception of a few very rare particular cases—if it be not, as we have shown, of divine origin, it is evident that it has been instituted only for the interest of the priesthood, to deify them in some measure, to give them a superiority over their fellow men, and subject them to their dominion. The head must bow, and the knee bend, before Him who has the power of consigning you to an abode of everlasting horrible torture, or of opening for you the gates of the kingdom of heaven. How can men who share this opinion help considering priests as superior to other men? How can such men help submitting to their laws, which, according to them, are only the expression of those of God? Does not the most powerful monarch of the earth, when he falls down at their feet, bows his head before them, and conforms to their orders, acknowledge, by this very act, his own inferiority? How can we afterwards be surprised at sacerdotal pretensions?

We are lost in astonishment when we consider the action of auricular confession, which, like merely mechanical invention, consists of two operations, succeeding each other uninterruptedly, but at longer or shorter intervals. Now a man gives himself up to the inclinations and vices of which he has contracted a habit, then he presents himself at a tribunal, before a judge in whom he acknowledges a virtue powerful enough to restore him to a state of purity in which he need no longer fear an avenging justice : it is thus he is led astray by habit, superstition, and the passions, into a vicious circle, where he turns round continually without knowing either where he is going, or where he will ultimately arrive. Without being filled with sincere repentance, which can proceed only from a boundless love for the offended Being, he has no other sentiment but that of terror ; and he believes it is sufficient not to be indifferent towards the sovereign judge, who must abide by the sacerdotal decision and prescription. Thus, the conscience reposes upon the word *attrition*—a barbarous, vague, and indeterminate expression, invented by the Casuists of the middle ages.* But, as to any sincere regret for having offended God, or any wish to satisfy his justice by genuine peni-

* *Attritionis nomen scripturis et patribus incognitum.*—(Estius, lib. iv., sent., dist. 16, § 9.)

tence, that is to say, by an amendment and the practice of real virtue, he cares but little about it. Saint Bonaventura said to the sinners of his time what might be addressed to those of our own: "Where is penitence? Who feels in these days any regret for having offended God? A man feels more keenly the loss of his ass! For, in such a case, he goes about to seek for him; but, after losing God, he seeks not for Him till after a long space of time."*

Penitence among the earlier Christians, though very severe, was considered as void when it was not attended with a change of life. "Penitence is void," says Tertullian, "when we do not correct ourselves."† The same doctrine is professed by the other fathers of the Church. Saint Isidorus says on this subject: "He who does what he has already repented of, and submits not to God, insults Him with arrogance."‡

The Church of Rome, which alone pretends to derive her origin from an apostolic succession,

* Ubi est pœnitentia? Quis hodie dolet si Deum offendit? Vere plus dolet si asinum perdidit? Quia asino perduto, mox eum quærit; sed Deo perduto et per tempora longissima, non requirit.—(S. Bonavent., serm. 2.)

† Ubi emendatio nulla, pœnitentia nulla.—(Tert., de Pœnit., c. 2.)

‡ Irrisor est non pœnitens, qui adhuc agit quod pœnitet, nec videtur Deum poscere subditus, sed subsannare superbus.

—(Isid. de Seville, lib. ii., senten., c. 165.)

from Saint Peter down to the present time, and grounds the proof of her doctrine upon an uninterrupted tradition, appears, however, to have entirely forgotten the principles according to which the Apostles and their immediate successors governed the Churches, especially in matters of confession and penance. As these things were required only for great crimes, they rejected from their community all such as did not conform to the law of their founder, having no other aim but that of forming a society of men who would practise with sincerity and constancy every Christian virtue, without any regard to the number of disciples. But the Roman Church, having become preponderant from her numerous usurpations, aimed only at extending her dominion. By imagining a new system of confession and penance, by augmenting the catalogue of sins and modifying their nature, and by reserving to herself the right of giving or refusing absolution, she has grasped the consciences of nations and of kings. For this purpose it was necessary to render pardon as easy as sin is attractive. One would think she had wished to make a sport of the laws of the Gospel.

Can we indeed believe that those who have been accumulating through the whole course of their lives confessions on absolutions, and absolutions on confessions, are penetrated, at each of those acts, with sincere repentance and a true love

of God? "This manner of acting," says Saint Clement of Alexandria, "is not a true penitence, but a false and specious one, when we often ask pardon for the very same sins which we often commit;* it is insulting God, as Saint Thomas expresses it by this comparison: 'Imagine a man kneeling before another man to whom he has given a blow, and then, by way of satisfaction, giving him another.'"† "To give fruits worthy of repentance," says Saint Augustin, "it is not sufficient to shed tears for the immoralities to which one has unfortunately been addicted; one must moreover renounce them for ever. . . . A man is not purified if, after bewailing his faults, he falls into them as before, making no effort to correct himself."‡ We must either abjure Christianity or adopt this doctrine, which is that of the Primitive Church, and which has been perverted only by ignorant Casuists and those who have wanted to make of religion an instrument of dominion and riches. There is no enlightened and truly religious ecclesiastic who has not admitted, even in these latter ages of corruption, a doctrine so conformable to the nature of things.

Let us corroborate this assertion by what Nicole

* Clement Alex., Strom., l. ii.

† S. Thomas, Suppl. 9, 14, art. 1.

‡ S. August., Sermon. 66, de Tempore.

says upon the same subject: "As to a change of heart, the mortification of the passions, the renouncing the love of the world, ambition, and pleasure, they are things about which people never trouble their minds. . . . For this reason, they make a sport of passing by revolutions from a state of guilt to a state of justice; to-day in grace, to-morrow in sin; to-day raised up to life, to-morrow backsliding into death! It is a mockery of God to fall back incessantly into the same crimes for which we have just asked his pardon."* In what, then, do all these confessions and penances finally end? In eternal damnation, according to principles admitted by all the fathers of the Church. The following is the opinion of Eusebius upon this subject:—

"It will, perhaps, be said that he who, after sinning throughout the course of his life, receives penance at the point of death, finds grace before God. Ah! how false and vain is this opinion! Among a hundred thousand persons who have habitually led a dissolute life, there is hardly one to be found who deserves to receive pardon from God. What forgiveness can he receive to whom men grant penance, whereas he himself would not ask for it, if he thought he could escape death? A man born and nourished in sin, who has neither

* Nicole, *De la Faus. Pénit.*

seen nor known God; who has been unwilling to hear his name; who has not even perceived that he was sinning; who knows not of what penitence consists, unless he has dreamed of it; who is even now bound down with the shackles of worldly affairs, oppressed with grief for his children whom he is about to abandon, worn out with the sufferings of his malady, and, lastly, with the regret of leaving behind him his temporal wealth and possessions, which he can no longer enjoy.” *

Saint Augustin calls into question those penances asked for through fear, at a moment when it is impossible to accomplish them. “The words pronounced by the absolving priest are not alone sufficient; for the satisfaction due to God is not to be obtained by words only, but by preceding works How can he do penance who has but a moment to live? How can he accomplish a penance who is totally unable to do works of atonement? For this reason, penance demanded by a sick man is vain. I am afraid that penance, in such a case, will die with the person who demands

* Forte qui iterum dicit, vir qui toto tempore quo vixit, male facit, in mortis articulo accepta pœnitentia a Deo veniam obtinebit. Heu quam vana inspicio et falsa meditatio. Vix de centum millibus hominum quorum mala semper fuit vita, meretur a Deo habere indulgentiam, unus. Vir totus in peccatis genitus et enutritus, qui nec Deum vidit, nec agnovit, nec de eo audire voluit, nec se peccare cognovit, nec quid

it."* We will content ourselves with quoting another authority, that of Saint Isidorus. "He who after leading a depraved life, demands penance at the point of death, is in a state of uncertainty concerning his salvation as well as about the remission of his sins. He, therefore, who desires to be certain of his own salvation in the hour of death ought to repent when he is in good health: he ought to groan over the crimes he has committed."†

We think we cannot conclude this work better

pœnitentia sit, nisi forte dormindo novit, totus ad huc secularibus innodatus negotiis, quem angustia premit filiorum quos deserit, quem infirmitas conterit, quem dolor divitiarum et temporalium bonorum concutit, cum non eis frui amplius se cernit, quam acceptam Deo accepit pœnitentiam, quam non acciperet, si adhuc se senari crederet?—(Eusebius ad Damas, de morte S. Hieronim.)

* *Ademendanda crimina vox pœnitentis sola non sufficit. Nam in satisfactione ingentium peccatorum, non verba tantum, sed opera quærentur. . . . Quomodo enim agit pœnitentiam lapsus? Quomodo pœnitentiam agere possit qui nulla jam pro se opera satisfactionis operari potest? Et ideo pœnitentia quæ ab infirmo petitur infirma est. Pœnitentia quæ a moriente tantum petitur, timeo ne in ipsa moriatur.—(August., serm. 57.)*

† *Qui autem prave vivendo, pœnitentiam agit in mortis periculo, sicut ejus damnatio incerta est; sic remissio dubia. Qui ergo cupit certus esse in morte de indulgentia sanus pœniteat; sanus perpetrata facinora defleat.—(Isidor., sentent., l. ii., c. 13.)*

than by recording the opinion of a worthy and virtuous ecclesiastic, who, after having possessed a curacy in the south of France for thirty years, renounced it the moment his studies and inquiries into the history of Christianity had fully convinced him that a great part of the dogmas, opinions, and institutions of Catholicism, had been successively imagined and established by the popes, bishops, monks, and councils, in contradiction to the precepts and morality of the Gospel. This estimable man, named Lafeuillade, with whom I have been intimately acquainted, had the more merit in relinquishing his curacy, that he was without every other means of subsistence; but, being a sincere friend of truth, he would have thought himself criminal had he continued, against the voice of his conscience, to preach to the people a doctrine which he considered as grounded upon error and falsehood. He even sought to make himself useful in opposing the principles of the Church of Rome, by publishing a work entitled, *Project for the Union of all the Churches, or Christianity Restored to its Primitive Institution*.* In the second volume of this work (p. 64) he expresses himself as follows upon the subject of confession, of which

* *Projet de la réunion de tous les cultes*, &c. Lyon, 1815, 4 vol. in 8°.

he must have well known the inconveniences, after having exercised it for so many years:—

“But, in comparison with the few persons to whom confession may be advantageous, how many are there to whom it becomes a source of scandal ! Most persons, indeed, come to the confessional only because it is a custom, and they would cause too many remarks did they not take the communion on certain festivals in the year. Thence it happens that, in order not to expose themselves to be refused an absolution, they avow to their confessor only a few peccadilloes ; they take good care not to speak of the robberies they may have committed, because they are not ignorant that their confessor would oblige them to make restitution ; and because, at the same time, what is good to take, say they, is good to keep. They also are very careful not to speak of their *amours*, so common among young people, because, being unwilling to renounce them, a recital of them would become a motive for excluding them from a participation in the holy mysteries. How many times moreover, does not shame keep them silent about so many secret infamous practices which it would be too painful to their self-respect to reveal ! Such persons, however, being well convinced that they commit abominable sacrilege in approaching the holy table in such a condition, accustom themselves from their youth to stifle the remorse of

their consciences, and they often become ultimately so hardened in guilt, that they commit with indifference the greatest crimes.

“I appeal to your own testimony, ministers of the Catholic religion! Is not this a faithful description of the effects which the establishment of confession is producing every day? Have you not acquired this certainty from the declarations of so many dying persons racked with the remorse of their consciences, from whom the fear of the tortures of an impending future, and the hope of avoiding them have extorted avowals which they had never dared to make during the whole course of their lives; but whose presumed return to better principles, obliged by circumstances, became henceforth useless to society?

“To what terrible dangers is not morality likewise exposed, when a young female is so situated as to reveal to a young confessor that an almost irresistible inclination is constantly enticing her to vicious indulgences? It is true, she has to make such declarations only through a grating; but that stops only the hand, without preserving the heart from the dangerous attacks of love; and if the heart be once affected, there is nothing to prevent further progress, except self-respect, which, unfortunately, but too often fails when opposed to the influence of a passion so violent and blind.

“From the observations I have just made, I do

not think it can appear doubtful that morality will gain much by the abolition of confession, because the sum of the inconveniences by which it is attended most certainly outweighs that of the advantages to be derived from it. Since confession, therefore, is only a human institution, as I have proved in this work, it becomes an urgent necessity to suppress it; and the more so, as it seems to have been established only as a preparatory means of receiving the sacrament of the consecrated wafer, which is also another human invention, as I think I have convinced every candid reader who has attentively perused the chapter relating to it in this work."

As it is probable that those who will read our "History of Confession" have never read the acts of the Council of Trent, we here subjoin the chapter in which that council enjoins auricular confession. We thought our readers might desire to become acquainted with the doctrine according to which that council founded this confession, and thus judge, by comparison, of the validity of the proofs which we have brought forward in the refutation we have made.

COUNCIL OF TRENT—XIV. SESSION.

CHAPTER V.ON CONFESSION.

“IN consequence of the institution of the sacrament of penitence, which has already been explained, the universal Church has always understood that the entire confession of sins was also instituted by our Lord, and that it is necessary, by divine right, to all those who have fallen into sin since their baptism; for our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend from earth to heaven, left priests for his vicars, and as judges and presidents, before whom the faithful should lay all the mortal sins into which they may have fallen; to the end that, according to the power which was given them to remit or retain sins,

they should pronounce sentence, it being manifest that priests could not exercise this jurisdiction without a cognizance of the case, nor preserve equity in the infliction of punishment, if penitents declared their sins only generally, and not particularly, and in detail.

Thence it follows that they ought to tell and declare all the mortal sins of which they feel they are guilty, after an exact examination of their consciences, even though such sins be profoundly concealed and committed only against the two last precepts of the Decalogue; sins of this sort being sometimes more dangerous, and wounding the soul more fatally than those which are committed in the sight of the world.

As to venial sins, by which we are not excluded from the grace of God, and into which we fall more frequently, though it be very proper, useful, and anything but presumptuous to confess them, as is proved by the custom of pious and devout people, they may nevertheless be omitted without offence, and expiated by several other remedies. But all mortal sins, even those of the mind, rendering men the children of wrath, and the enemies of God, it is necessary to seek from God a pardon for them all by a sincere and contrite confession. Accordingly, when the faithful study to confess all the sins which occur to their memory, they, doubtless, expose them all to the

mercy of God, as if to acknowledge them; and they who act otherwise, and voluntarily retain some of them, present nothing to the goodness of God that can be remitted by the priest; for if the patient be ashamed to show his wound to the physician, his art cannot cure what he is unacquainted with.

It follows, moreover, that it is also necessary to explain in confession the circumstances which change the species of sin, because, without this, sins are not entirely revealed by the penitents, nor sufficiently known to the judges, to make a just estimation of the magnitude of the crimes, and to inflict upon penitents a suitable punishment. It is therefore a thing contrary to reason to publish that these circumstances have been invented by people who had no other occupation, or that it is sufficient to declare one, as to say that one has sinned against one's brother. But it is impious to add, that confession in this matter, such as it is commanded, is impossible, or to term it the annoyance and torture of consciences. For it is unquestionable that nothing else is desired of penitents in the Church but that each, after a careful self-examination, and search into all the corners and most secret recesses of his conscience, should confess the sins with which he may remember to have mortally offended his Lord and his God. As for the other sins which do not occur to the mind

of a person who attentively thinks of them, they are supposed to be included in general in the same confession; and it is for them that we say confidently with the prophet: *Cleanse me, O Lord, from my secret sins.*

It must, however, be owned that confession, from the difficulties which occur, and especially from the shame we feel in revealing our sins, might appear a somewhat heavy yoke, were it not rendered light by so many consolations and advantages, which are indubitably received, from absolution, by all those who worthily approach to partake of that sacrament.

As to the manner of confessing secretly to the priest alone, although Jesus Christ has not forbidden any one, for his own humiliation, and to revenge himself of his crimes, to confess them publicly, either for the sake of giving a good example to others, or for the purpose of edifying the Church which has been offended, it is not, however, a thing commanded by a divine precept, nor would it be fit either to order by any human law that sins, particularly such as are secret, should be discovered by a public confession. For this reason, therefore, and moreover in the general and unanimous consent of all the most ancient saintly fathers, who have ever authorised secret sacramental confession, which the holy Church has practised from the very beginning, and which she still uses at the present

day, we see a manifest refutation of the vain calumny of those who are so rash as to publish that it is only a human invention, foreign to the commands of God, and that it originated only in the Council of Latran, under favour of the fathers who were there assembled; for the Church did not establish, in that council, the precept of confession for the faithful, well knowing that it was already quite established and necessary by divine right; but it merely ordered that all and each of the faithful, when they have attained the age of discretion, should fulfil this precept of confession, at least once a year. Whence it comes, that in all the Church this salutary custom of confessing sins is observed with much benefit to the souls of the faithful, particularly at the holy and favourable season of Lent; and the Holy Council, extremely approving this custom, receives and embraces it as full of piety and worthy of being retained."

THE END.







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